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by insulting his father, begs pardon of them by bringing a bull which his father may eat with them; or a daughter-in-law, having inadvertently caught sight of her father-in-law, brings beer for him to drink with his neighbours.

At all feasts food is allotted in terms of kinship and village affiliation, and this tends to enhance the solidarity of kin groups and villages. For example, funeral meat is first divided between relatives and non-relatives, and that allocated to non-relatives is sub-divided by villages, each village headman present being given a share to divide between his people, men and women. When a relative of the chief has died, and the whole country has come to mourn, the chief allots a cow to each of his senior headmen, who then divide the carcasses between the villages in their respective halves of the chiefdom. The meat at a 'coming out' ceremony, and at the great feasts which were held after battle, was divided in the same way, and we saw a division of this kind when a senior headman who had been in exile was welcomed home (cf. pp. 273–4). Thus the right to share in a feast depends either on kinship with the provider, or on membership of a village.

The Christians' code of hospitality differs somewhat from that of the pagans: the latter stress feeding *neighbours*, whether it be in the daily eating together, or at informal beer and dinner parties, or at ceremonies, while the Christians stress feeding strangers, quoting the text 'I was a stranger and ye took me in'[1] and the parable of the Good Samaritan.[2] The pagans jibe at the Christians for being inhospitable because (as the Christians themselves admit) they entertain their neighbours less than pagans do; the Christians point to their wider obligations, and the fact that they do feed and house visitors from a distance, especially fellow Christians gathering for Church festivals. The Christians are very conscious also of the difficulties of hospitality in a monogamous household, for a wife must not only do all the cooking for visitors (and many Nyakyusa dishes require considerable labour to prepare), but she must also help to grow the food. The pagan who can afford to entertain much has several wives who share the work between them, whereas a Christian, no matter how rich, cannot have more than one wife and remain a member of his Church—unless it be one of the two small independent

[1] Matthew xxv. 35.
[2] Luke x. 29.

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574 African churches which countenance polygyny. The difficulty is
•184 partially overcome in some well-to-do Christian families by hiring labour to work in their fields and to fetch water and wood, and by offering visitors coffee or tea, which are easily prepared, in place of home-brewed beer; nevertheless the conflict between [182] the value of hospitality (to which pagan and Christian alike subscribe, though they define it rather differently) and the value of monogamy, is often acute.

621 The mutual obligations of neighbours are not confined to feeding one another, for neighbours share with relatives the obligation of giving sympathy and assistance at the various crises in Nyakyusa life; the concept of *ukwangala* includes keeping on good terms with people by being sympathetic and obliging.

764 All the members of a village (except young children) are
621 obliged to attend every burial of an adolescent or adult in that village; they go to mourn the death of a neighbour or condole with one who is burying a 'son', for if a man dies while his father (or father's full brother, or his own senior brother) is yet alive, he is often buried in his 'father's' homestead.[1] Where a youth or man is buried by his 'father', his fellow villagers must attend the funeral also, but boys and young men need not go to a funeral in their fathers' village unless it is a village-mate of their own who is being buried.

[184] Funerals are occasions for feasting and dancing, so the obligation 'to mourn one another' (*ukulilanela*) does not press hardly, and the Nyakyusa feeling is that no one would fail to come unless he were a witch, and fearful lest his victim rise from the grave and denounce him. 'If a man does not go to his neighbour's burial then at once people say: "It was you who bewitched him. Why else do you not come to bury him?" ' Failure to come is certain evidence that the truant is 'a harsh man who does not keep on good terms with people (*nkali, atikwangala kawanu nabanda*)'.

764 One neighbour, 'he who went about most with the dead man', is appointed by the headman of the village to help the relatives dig the grave, and village neighbours must also bring small gifts of food and firewood for the entertainment of the many guests.

[1] A married man whose 'fathers' are dead, or do not choose to exercise their right to bury him, is buried at his own home, and a woman who has borne a child is buried at her husband's home.

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which witchcraft and 'the breath of men' operate, but their supposed fields of action are relatively distinct.

In the past, the punishment for sorcery was death with torture by impaling, not merely confiscation of property and banishment. Proof of the practice of sorcery depended upon the evidence of the doctor who had supplied the medicine (who was not regarded as implicated in the crime) and upon the *mwavi* ordeal. The Nyakyusa insist that the practice of sorcery was formerly rare, and that it has increased enormously, much more than the practice of witchcraft. This belief is to be related to two facts. First, Nyakyusa co-operate much more than they formerly did with people who live in different villages. The clerks who work together in Government offices, and who have a fearsome reputation as sorcerers, do not necessarily live in the same village; and being apart at night when the witches fly, they cannot be supposed to bewitch one another. But there is frequent occasion for friction between them and therefore a standing temptation to employ sorcery. So also in other types of employment, in trade and on journeys, individuals are frequently in contact with men of different villages. Secondly, belief in sorcery is felt to be compatible with the acceptance of a scientific explanation of causes of disease in a way that belief in witchcraft is not. *Ubutege* is commonly translated as 'poisoning' by those who speak English, whether the medicine is or is not put into food or drink, or whether it is supposed to affect all who eat it or only the individual against whom it is directed. All types of sorcery tend to be rationalized as 'poisoning'; and many educated Nyakyusa who deny the reality of witchcraft admit to a lively fear of sorcerers.

As the table on pp. 198–213 shows, however, accusations of witchcraft are still much more common than accusations of sorcery in the community as a whole. We heard of thirty-eight cases of supposed witchcraft to eleven of sorcery, and there was no reason to think that our friends were more likely to mention the one type of case than the other.

d. The age-village and Christianity

Since common action against witches, and to punish transgressors through 'the breath of men', is one of the primary functions of an age-village, what happens in a Christian village, or

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when members of a pagan village embrace Christianity? Orthodox Nyakyusa Christians, that is, those accepting the teaching of the European missionaries of any of the four denominations at work in the area, deny the reality of witchcraft and of 'the breath of men'; they deny the power of any individual to harm another by virtue of 'a python' in the stomach, or to bring illness to his erring neighbour by murmuring with others about him.

As we have already seen, the profession of Christianity and school education tend to coincide among the Nyakyusa, and the educated tend to be sceptical of witchcraft, while believing in sorcery. Such scepticism is directly related to the dogmatic teaching of missionaries, to instruction in physiology in schools, and to the challenge of certain missionaries and Nyakyusa Christians that pagans should prove the existence of witchcraft at autopsies (*vide* Document, p. 254). The suggestion that 'pythons' are really acute tape-worm (*vide supra* p. 92) or an enlarged kidney is typical of the critical attitude of educated Christians to pagan dogma. We have no doubt that belief in witchcraft is weakening, and that this weakening is directly due to mission teaching.

Nevertheless most Christians continue to have some belief in a mystical power exerted by individuals or groups to the harm of others. For a few the contradiction between the traditional and the Christian dogma involves acute mental conflict; for many the conflict is resolved through the concept of 'the curse' (*ikigume*) of the congregation, led by the priest or pastor and elders, and through emphasis on sorcery rather than on witchcraft. Most Christians believe that the just wrath of those set in authority, and of the faithful members of a congregation, may bring misfortune on a sinner. They argue that the power which punishes the wrong-doer comes from God, not from ancestors or from pythons in men's bellies, but that it is brought upon an individual by the anger and murmuring of men.[1] Further, it is believed that

[1] The phrase 'the breath of men' (*umuhepo iya bantu*) is never used with reference to the punishment of sinners in the Christian congregation, but always 'the curse' (*ikigume*), a word which is used to translate certain phrases in the Gospels, and which conveys an idea felt to be compatible with Christian dogma. As already noted (p. 101) the pagans of the plain and of Selya use 'the curse' (*ikigume*) more or less synonomously with 'the breath of men' (*umuhepo iya bantu*). For details of cases of misfortune attributed to the curse of Christians see Monica Hunter, 'An African Christian Morality', *Africa*, Vol. X (1937), pp. 263–91.

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Christians are only affected by the shocked astonishment of fellow Christians, not by the disapproval of pagans, and the unit within which 'the curse' is commonly spoken of as operating is the congregation. In two of the cases we recorded (*vide* Document, p. 209) it was suggested that illness was due to the anger of neighbours, fellow Christians, over stinginess and greed, but in the other cases it was not village neighbours who were primarily concerned, but the Christian congregation, a group embracing members from many villages.

The type of behaviour believed to be punishable by 'the curse' of fellow Christ ans also differs somewhat from that thought to be punished by 'the breath of men'. The virtue Christians emphasize most is chastity, and 'the curse' is often said to be a punishment for fornication or adultery. The other sin commonly spoken of as bringing down a curse is disobedience, or disrespectful behaviour to the minister (or priest) or elder of the congregation. Among pagans 'the breath of men' serves also to sanction sexual morals and to sustain respect for those in authority, but their sex code is different. It is incest, or familiarity between father- and daughter-in-law, which they regard as really evil, not sex relations outside marriage. And they emphasize respect to senior relatives and fathers' neighbours rather than to the leaders of any wider group.

Christians lay much less stress on hospitality to neighbours than pagans, and it is generally agreed that they eat alone more than pagans would dare to do. As one Christian put it, a pagan would *always* call his neighbours to share meat or beer when he had it, but a Christian might eat a sheep, or a goat, or even a calf, alone with his family. It is good, the Christians say, to call friends to share a feast, but not an inescapable obligation. Nor do Christians regularly send the saddle and ribs of any animal they kill to the chief, as pagans do; 'for', they say, 'we do not fear "the breath of men"'. But hospitality towards strangers is felt to be a condition of salvation. One informant explained that 'If a man is stingy towards his neighbours it does not matter; but if he is stingy towards a stranger from a distance, he might die from lack of food; and that would be the fault of the stingy one. Such a fault would prevent him from entering Heaven.' This statement points to the most striking difference between Christian and pagan morality—the range of moral obligations. A pagan's duties

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are primarily to kinsmen and fellow villagers, and secondarily to fellow members of his chiefdom; beyond the chiefdom and circle of kinsmenhe had, traditionally, no obligations. The Christian definitio of 'neighbour' is a much wider one. It is emphasized by th missionaries that the Christian Church is universal, and Nyakyusa Christians themselves are conscious of their unity with, al obligations to, members of other chiefdoms, other cultural grps, and other races. The new sanctions for behaviour operatewithin the Christian group—the emphasis on Christian duty; thhope of that 'peace which passeth all understanding' and of rnal life; and the fear of suspension or expulsion from the comunion of the faithful, and of hell-fire[1]—all these apply to relions beyond, as well as within, the village, the chiefdom, andhe circle of kin.

Two other poin were mentioned by Christian informants when discussing e differences between pagan and Christian morality: they sa that Christian children growing up were liable to be 'prou(*namatiego*) in their bearing and manner of greeting, because ey do not fear 'the breath of men'; and also that Christian menwere not afraid to ask many cattle for their daughters at mange, again because they do not fear their neighbours' disappval in the way pagans fear it. The implication is that there is ss insistence upon conformity to a given code among Christiansthan among pagans; a greater tolerance of diversity of behavir.

These differenc between pagan and Christian dogma are matched by diffences between their ritual. There are no Christian rituals inwhich the village as a group, distinct from other groups, is cocerned. The congregation—the group worshipping in one chuh—is drawn from many villages, and though devout Christians ling in the same neighbourhood often gather for morning and ening prayer, such rituals never include a whole village. Evn a Christian village on mission land only a small proportion ofhe villagers attend daily prayer regularly. As we have seen, the mbers of a pagan village meet from time to time to warn off wiches, or to bless a repentant wrong-doer (*vide supra*, pp. 101, 105f.), but since belief in witchcraft or in 'the curse' is not orthodox among Christians, there is no ritual con-

[1] cf. Monica Hunter, 'n African Christian Morality', *Africa*, Vol. X (1937), p. 265-90.

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nected with it in a Christian village or village-section. The nearest parallel to the pagan ritual of reconciliation is the formal readmission of a repentant sinner to the congregation.

The change in belief and ritual tends to weaken village solidarity; for the Christian village is neither a defensive unit, nor is it the group from within which retribution and forgiveness come. A Christian does not feel himself dependent upon village neighbours to the same degree as does a pagan. We argue that the extension of the range of interdependence reduces its intensity in the narrower circles of relationship, and this is evident in the religious as in the economic aspect.[1]

Since the authority of a village headman is largely dependent upon his supposed mystical power, Christians are rarely appointed to this office by the Nyakyusa. We heard of only one Christian headman and he was in the country of a Christian chief. Christians cannot go through the full 'coming out' ceremony which involves treatment with medicines to give *amaŋgo*, and a Christian headman cannot fulfil the traditional ritual functions in relation to the chief and his ancestors. But in Ngonde, where the percentage of Christians is high (46 per cent as opposed to 15 per cent among the Nyakyusa) and the 'coming out' ceremony has been dropped, there are a number of Christian headmen who simply abstain from the performance of any pagan rituals (as does the Kyungu himself) leaving them to those headmen who are pagan and feel the ritual to be important. And pagan informants whom we asked about defence against witchcraft in a village in which the headman was a Christian, replied: 'Others will protect the country from witchcraft,' implying that there are always other 'defenders' in a village besides its leader.

In Christian village-sections the same difficulties do not arise, for assistant headmen are never treated at the 'coming out', nor have they ritual functions, other than the formal reproof of supposed witches (*vide supra*, p. 109). Hence the recognized leader of any group of Christians living in a pagan village is normally a Christian. In Christian villages on mission land the leaders are, of course, always Christian. These villages do not participate in any 'coming out' ceremony and the leaders are appointed by the missionary in consultation with the 'session' (*i.e.* representatives of the congregation), not by the old chief and

[1] *cf.* G. and M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, pp. 25–41.

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his village headmen. In some villages the 'elder' is both a religious leader and a secular authority, but there is a tendency to separate the two offices and to appoint a 'peacemaker' whose duty it is to settle disputes, collect taxes, and represent the village in its relationships with the chief and the administration, while the 'elder' confines himself to watching over the spiritual welfare of his people. Such division of authority is symptomatic of the growing differentiation of Nyakyusa society.

e. Witchcraft, medicines, and the British administration

Under British administration the use of the *ummafi* ordeal, imputation of witchcraft, intimidation or obtaining goods under false pretences by threats of witchcraft or sorcery, or offers of protection against them, are punishable offences. As we have seen, the ordeal is now administered only in the greatest secrecy, and probably very seldom, but accusations of witchcraft are frequent, and are even heard before the Native Courts, though not recorded (*vide* Document, p. 257). In the villages near the Government station more caution is observed in making accusations than in more remote parts of the district: very often the identity of the witch is only hinted at, or thorns are piled at his door by persons who remain anonymous (*vide supra*, p. 114) so that no individual can be convicted of imputing witchcraft. As one man put it: '"The defenders" see the witches, but cannot name them to anyone.' Autopsies continue in conservative villages but they are no longer performed on every corpse, as is said to have been customary in the old days. The chief Porokoto, himself a sceptic, argued that it was no use performing an autopsy when a charge could not be laid. If the members of a village are all convinced that a particular fellow is a witch he is forced to move, since his unpopularity becomes intolerable to him (*supra*, pp. 110–5). As Mwambuputa put it: 'We don't like him, and he doesn't like us either: he does not enjoy our company (*atikwangala na nsuwe*), so he moves.' But if the friction is only between two individuals, the supposed witch may brazen it out, for without resort to the *ummafi* ordeal there is no sure means of deciding between the accuser and the accused.

The prohibition of witch-finding is not accepted as right and just: the common view is that the Europeans 'protect the witches',

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121 611 object or action which it is felt to resemble. The images men use, the things they feel to be alike, are determined in a general way by the form of the society, and Nyakyusa images are in terms of bananas, staple grains, cattle, smithing on a primitive forge, lineage organization and so on. There are cultural idioms, accepted forms of expression, which frequently recur, but the particular associations are not predictable any more than the associations made by a poet in our own society—the priest and the doctor are indeed in one aspect poets.

771 813 843 The essence of Nyakyusa ritual is that things which are felt to be alike are taken as causally connected. Both positive actions and avoidances or taboos are based on the assumption that like objects or actions react on one another. This was clearly recognized by an informant who remarked: 'avoidances come from resemblances.' The basis is invariably the *feeling* of likeness, but mixed up with this there is often exact observation, as in the following taboo. The husband of a pregnant woman may not hunt big game because, it is said, they will be unusually fierce and attack him particularly. The association made is between a pregnant woman who is irritable, 'fierce' (*akali*), and the game which is fierce. The husband is identified with his wife, 'and', the Nyakyusa say, 'lion *always* attack a cow in calf'. Sometimes like things are felt to be antagonistic, as 'seed in the belly' and seed in the ground, and sometimes sympathetic. Sometimes like is thought to produce like—a pregnant woman is forbidden to sit close to someone lest she bears twins—and sometimes men mime a misfortune as a prophylactic against it.

789 184 771 The rituals are magical in the sense that efficacy is held to lie in the particular material form,[1] but they vary in detail with the cultural group, just as the language does.[2] The rituals of the Lake-shore plain in Tanganyika (MuNgonde) and of Selya are almost identical, but those of the Kukwe, the Lugulu, the Saku, the Ndali, the Penja, and the people of Ngonde in Nyasaland are all somewhat different. Differences in ritual are directly connected by the people themselves with differences in lineage, and the principle is maintained that every individual follows the ritual of his or her father's lineage, though a married woman will follow that of her

[1] For a discussion of this characteristic of magic cf. G. & M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change* (1945), pp. 72–3; 88–95.

[2] An account of the various cultural groups included under Nyakyusa, and of related peoples, is given in *Good Company*, pp. 1–5.

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husband when at her husband's home. Kakune, a doctor, explained: 'The ritual for a woman is that of her husband's group, always. My mother was Lugulu, but at her death we did the Kukwe ritual. If my daughter marries a Sangu and dies, they will do the Sangu ritual; she has moved.' We attended a death ritual which was actually performed in two slightly different ways by two sets of mourners. A member of a Sangu family, long established in Selya, had died; sons and daughters of the family performed what was said to be the Sangu ritual, but the children of daughters married to Selya men performed the Selya ritual. Whether the Sangu ritual is really so similar to the Selya ritual as this celebration suggests is doubtful—it seems unlikely, since the Sangu are very different from the Nyakyusa in other respects and their languages are not mutually intelligible—but some sort of adjustment had been made by this foreign family living in Selya and by others in a like position. Our informants *expected* to find parallels to the events of their own rituals in the rituals of neighbouring groups, and they expected also to find *minor* differences. Any variations are explained by the phrase 'that is the custom in their lineage', and the officiant is the final arbitrator as to what is correct. A number of informants also pointed out that the staple foods were used in the death ritual and that these varied somewhat with the area. 'We eat the principal food of the country—it differs with different people. The Kisi and Ngonde (of Nyasaland) use fish, the Ndali use goats, we Nyakyusa cannot use rice but the Swahili would. Our food is bananas.[1] The pumpkin, which we also use, is a very old vegetable and is still much eaten; it is one of the best vegetables.' The Sangu use millet porridge, the Penja maize and beans.

In this book are described the rituals of the main cultural groups of the Nyakyusa—those of the people of Selya and Masoko and the Lake-shore plain (MuNgonde)[2] which are similar, and those of the Kukwe which are different, and a few references are made to other variations. The variations are suggestive, for though the details differ, the values and attitudes expressed are identical. There are also minor differences between families of the same cultural group, and in the practice of different officiants, but their

[1] The Nyakyusa use *imitoki* as a general word for plantains and bananas, though *itoki* is properly one variety of plantain. 'Bananas' is used here to include all varieties of bananas and plantains.

[2] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 6.

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interpretations scarcely differ. Thus the commonly accepted idea that ritual forms are more stable than the interpretation of symbolism[1] does not hold for the Nyakyusa.

The account of the ritual cycle begins with an analysis of funeral rites, for of all the family rituals they involve the greatest emotional tension and are the most elaborate, as well as being performed far more frequently than any others. Moreover, in them are adumbrated symbolic patterns which recur again and again throughout the cycle; in them is apparent that preoccupation with fertility characteristic of the cycle—they are a rite of creation as well as a farewell to the dead—and in them lies the key to an understanding of the conception of the *abagwike*, 'those who have risen from the dead', that is, the shades.

The principal participants in these rituals are immediate kin—parents and children, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren—but the circle included varies with the particular ritual concerned and more distant relatives and neighbours are involved in varying degrees. In order to bring out these differences and avoid repetition, the detailed discussion of who takes part is deferred until after all the rituals have been described.

Should any Nyakyusa, reading this, feel that matters have been revealed which should remain secret, I would remind them that the interpretation of traditional ritual reveals a profound similarity in the phantasies of the Nyakyusa and those of other races; and such understanding of the dark places of men's minds as the *abanyago* possess may swell that body of knowledge which is the heritage of men of all races and cultures.

[1] A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (1952), pp. 153–7; A. N. Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effects* (1928), p. 75.

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764 according to lineage custom. In the round and oval graves the body is placed in the cave in a sitting position; in the oblong graves lying at full length on one arm; but in both the dead man is set to face the direction from which he and his people have [173] traditionally come. The bulk of the Nyakyusa say that they came from the east, eight or ten generations ago, down the Livingstone Mountains into their present country; and it is to the east that they face in death. Those in the north of the district, whose local name is Kukwe, face in death towards their most recent centre of dispersion near Rungwe Mountain, although they have traditions going farther back to a migration from the Livingstone Mountains through the present Sangu country.

Digging a grave is traditionally a dangerous activity, but nowadays it is no longer so much feared as it used to be. Formerly only mature men helped to dig a grave and they were given a whole leg of the burial meat to eat by themselves. Nowadays young men —often Christians—do it.

Before the burial the body is carried in procession round the homestead. The chief mourners surround it wailing, and the dead man's cattle are driven in front. 'We do this to honour the dead man.' Then one of the cattle of the lineage is taken 'to look into the grave'. Two or three people get down into the grave to receive and bury the body. In the case of a man, his chief wife, his sister, and a male kinsman or village neighbour usually bury him. These three line the cave with mats and cloths which are passed down to them; then the body, previously washed and shaved[1] and now wrapped in cloths, is handed down, and they put it in position in the cave together with a few personal possessions such as a pipe, an eating-pot, a little calabash of ointment, and one of beer; nowadays also a looking-glass and perhaps a pencil and a cup. 'He goes with them to the place of the shades.' A woman is given bark-cloth belts and rouge, and a winnowing basket in place of the pipe and pot. They take off the strings of such utensils as are normally hung up. 'If the strings are left on the utensils will still be hanging up and he will be looking for them.' More cloths and mats are then put in with the body, and the cave is closed either with a stiff mat or with the door of the dead man's house, in accordance with local custom. Often there are hot disputes be-

[184] [1] The Kukwe wash the body just before death, the Nyakyusa and Penja after. The Kukwe fear lest their children should die of 'water in the stomach' if they wash a corpse.

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it seems as if there was another disease in the corpse itself, it is a stinking mass of disease.' Traditionally they use two medicinal plants to wash with, but in some chiefdoms near mission stations they now wash without them. The chief of one such country explained: 'In the old days they feared very much to eat before bathing—but now sometimes they just wash their hands and eat. Of old they feared death, they feared lest the disease should spread, they wished to rid themselves of the contamination of the corpse. They used to wash with two plants—as medicine. Now they just bathe in the stream or sometimes only just wash their hands.' But, particularly in chiefdoms at a distance from the centres of European influence, the fear of the contagion of death is still very strong.

Death then is, for the majority of pagan Nyakyusa, a fearful as well as a grievous event; less fearful than it used to be to their fathers, but more fearful by far to them than it is to their Christian neighbours.

(*c*) *The sacrifice*

At all except the very poorest burials one or more head of cattle are killed. Cows are provided whenever possible, but, if no cows are available, bulls may be used instead. If the man who has died left cattle of his own, one at least of his herd is killed; if he has left none, his family make every effort to buy or borrow one, or else they provide one themselves from their own herds. If the dead man was rich, several of his cows will be killed. If his senior son has cattle of his own, he should kill one for his father (*ikumbamba*) and if there are a number of grown-up sons the senior of each group of full brothers will offer a cow.

Not only the immediate family of a dead man but also the fathers (or brothers) of his wives and the husbands of his full sisters and daughters are expected to provide cows for killing at his burial, and if he is buried at his 'father's' place then his 'father's' affinal relatives also are expected to bring cattle or cloths. When a married woman dies, her husband and her own 'father' are expected each to provide a cow or a bull. Occasionally other affines of her husband bring calves, but less usually. More cattle are killed for men than for women. For a young child nothing is killed.

The cattle are killed either by the dead man's 'father' or by his heir; if a woman has died, then by her husband. At a man's burial

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men cut down some of the bananas which surround the huts and the open place in front of them. 'The owner has died, it is a sign to men that someone has died there.' 'We do it so that it should not seem as if he was still alive; if the bananas were not cut but all stood they would cause us to remember that he was recently alive.' 'We wish the dead man to take them with him to the land of the shades.' And for exactly the same reasons some of the calabashes and pots of a dead woman are broken at her burial, and saplings of the *ficus* used for making bark-cloth are cut down. We have seen older men get up and check the dancers from destroying too many bananas. They told us that 'in the old days we used to cut down all the bananas of a dead man and any crops that were growing near the house also; but now we think that if we destroy all the food his children will die of hunger! So we just cut down a few bananas.' This destruction of food is connected with the belief that a man, when he dies, takes the fertility of the land with him, and this loss of fertility can only be avoided by the proper performance of the funeral ritual. The present moderation of the ritual destruction of food is, we think, an index of the decline of the power of the old belief; for the fear of future hunger, which now restrains them, used to encourage them to a greater sacrifice.

(*d*) *The wailing and dancing*

From the time of the death until the end of the three or four days of the burial rites, wailing continues intermittently. 'We weep because we grieve and tremble with fear.' The old women are the most persistent, next come the men and boys. 'The women weep all the time; even at night they only sleep a little, weeping and sleeping and then weeping again! But we men weep just once, when we first arrive, we do not go on and on.' The chief mourners (*abenemfwa*: lit. owners of the death) among the women, that is the mother, stepmothers, wives, sisters, daughters, and brothers' wives, spend most of the time inside one of the huts, which is the centre of the wailing. The other women spend some time inside the hut, wailing with the chief mourners, but then they move to make way for others and sit just outside. On the plain and in Selya they sit packed close together and sway rhythmically as they wail in chorus, following a leader who stands in their midst. Tears roll down her face as she chants short phrases ending in the high-pitched wail: 'Alas father! Alas! Aaaaaaaaaaa! Farewell! Go So-and-so, farewell . . . we long for you, Father, farewell!' In the

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hills the women who are outside do not bunch together, and the wailing is both less rhythmical and less abandoned. The people of the plains laugh at them for not wailing properly. 'In the hills their funerals do not go well; each one wails separately. Here we listen to one another.' 'In Selya they lament a death properly; here [in the hills] they do not; they wail higgledy-piggledy, each one on her own. But we of Selya, and the people of MuNgonde and Masoko, we lead the wailing properly. There is always one person as leader and others follow her. If a woman does not follow, the leader will drive her away from the funeral saying "Wail alone". And if a widow wails out of time, they reprove her also saying: "Friend, we have come to lament at your funeral, but if you want to wail alone we will go and leave you with your husband." Then she agrees. . . . The leader speaks of the childhood and adult life of the deceased and concludes: "And then you died, farewell!" '

The chief mourners among the men—father, brothers, sons—go into the hut at first and wail with the women, but then they come out and sit with the men. Other male relatives, neighbours, and friends, as they arrive, go to the door of the hut, or just inside, and greet the women sympathetically; then they go and greet the chief mourners among the men and sit down with them. We asked the reason for the sympathetic greeting and were told: 'It is the custom at a burial; and when I die they will come to greet me also.' No exact line of division can be drawn between the wailing of the chief mourners and others, for some of the more distant male relatives go right inside and spend some time wailing and shedding tears. And both among the chief mourners and others the extent to which grief is thus expressed varies considerably.

In the groups of men and boys there is no wailing. The group of women outside wail intermittently at first, but later their attention is diverted to watching the burial dance. Those within the hut wail continuously before and for several hours after the burial, and on succeeding days they begin again each time new arrivals come into the hut to sympathize, and at nightfall as the crowds move off home.

Before the actual burial the body is kept in the hut and the chief women mourners hold it in their arms. One man expressed the opinion that, if a death occurred late in the evening or at night, the body should not be buried before noon the next day, so as to give people time 'to weep and assuage their grief, for they always wail more before the body is buried, when they can see the

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forted, I think people follow the custom, many have come to see me.'

There is no criticism of men or women who come to a burial to dance rather than to weep: 'They are not relatives—it is our custom of mourning.' They are saluting the dead and 'seeing him on his way', they are helping 'to comfort the relatives'. The presence of non-relatives at a burial is variously determined by feelings of affection and grief, of respect and sympathy for the family, by a sense of shame, by fear of being accused of witchcraft, and finally by the attraction of the crowds, the lively conversation, the dancing, and the meat.

At the burial of a Nyakyusa Christian there is little unrestrained wailing and no dancing; instead the young men of the congregation gather round the grieving relatives and sing cheerful hymns, full of the certainty of Heaven, 'to accompany him on his way to God' and 'to comfort the mourners'.

(*e*) *Prestige at funerals*

As has already been indicated, the length of the mourning depends upon the status of the deceased. It is short for a child—there is no sacrifice and no crowd; for a rich man it is longer than for a poor man; for the kinsman of a chief longer than for a commoner. Mwaikambo explained:

> Many conceal their position (*ubufumuke*), it only appears at death. People may never know that a man is rich—only those who build close to him will know—but when he dies many know; many people come to the funeral. For a commoner, an ordinary person, the drums usually play a lament for two days only, sometimes for three, but for a village headman they play the lament for four days, or perhaps a week, and also for a man who has married a chief's daughter it continues for four days or a week. Then people ask why the drums are playing for so long and the reply comes: 'He married into the chief's family. The chief honours him in kinship.' Drums follow the importance of a man.
>
> Those who stay longest at a funeral are kinsmen. If a man has many kinsmen then the funeral will last long because his kinsmen do not return home quickly. A chief has many kinsmen, more than anyone else, because the people of his chiefdom are all like kinsmen. With a village headman also the people who build with him are somewhat like kinsmen, and his funeral lasts a long time.

The size of the crowd at a funeral depends very largely upon the amount of meat provided, and this in turn depends upon the

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CHAPTER III

FAREWELL TO THE DEAD

After spending three or four days weeping, and feasting, and dancing, the main body of mourners scatter to their homes, but the close kinsmen remain for a week or two sleeping at the home of the deceased, awaiting the ritual of farewell. The Nyakyusa themselves distinguish three main events in it: the 'picking up of pumpkin-seeds' (*ukusala inyungu*) when the chief mourners first begin to wash; the 'shaving of the sprouting hair' (*ukutemela ilitemelo*) when the beer of inheritance is brewed and the estate divided; and the 'ritual of the gasping cough' (*ingotolo*) when the widows, having lain with the heir, go to visit their parents. The details differ appreciably between Selya and MuNgonde on the one hand, and Kukwe country on the other, and we describe them separately.

1. IN SELYA AND MUNGONDE

(*a*) *The events*

i. '*Picking up pumpkin-seeds.*' The picking up of pumpkin-seeds begins with the formal recognition of the heir, if the deceased was a married man. The heir and widows are suddenly seized and hustled, resisting, into the mourning hut. If they go willingly 'it seems as if they wished their relative to die'. The officiant smears their chests with ash and puts a strand of the *ilingolongofwa* creeper on each one's right shoulder. These are both signs of mourning, and the creeper is also 'a sign that we have given him the inheritance'. After a few minutes the heir and widows are formally summoned to come out of the hut, and they go off to wash away the ash and creeper in the stream. But first, the flowering head of a banana is buried in the courtyard near the door of the mourning hut and the grave of the deceased. If he was not a married man and there are no widows to be inherited, the ritual begins with this. The banana flower is explicitly identified with the corpse: it must face in the direction from which the ancestors came, as the corpse does; if the deceased is a male the flowering head is from a plantain (*itoki*); if a female from a sweet banana (*injali* or *indefu* or

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765 deceased was a man and wealthy, the heir kills a bull or cow for a feast.

765 According to one account, 'the heir kills a cow saying: "This is
184 your cow, Father." Then he takes the praying calabash and fills it with beer and goes to the banana grove. The others sit in the courtyard watching from afar. He blows beer and then pours out a little, several times, mentioning the dead man's name and those of three or four prominent dead relatives, and prays for children, health, and food. He takes his own senior son (or the son of his dead brother) with him to see what he does, for he (the son) will do it after his death. Then they come back and the meat is eaten and beer drunk.' But we never saw this happen nor was the prayer in the banana grove mentioned by other informants.

782 If the millet put to soak fails to sprout, however, there must be
765 prayer. It is thought that there has been disagreement among the mourners and the shades are angry and have spoilt the millet. The kinsmen gather to confess their quarrels and pray before preparing another batch.

765 At the shaving of the sprouting hair (or some other time during the death ritual) the sisters of the dead man formally admonish his widows on their behaviour as wives. One admonition recorded lasted two hours, and the main theme was the stinginess of the widows in entertaining their sisters-in-law when the latter had come to visit.

765 On the morning after 'the shaving of the sprouting hair' the par-
768 ticipants shave their whole heads and are anointed with ointment by
587 the officiant. In the evening comes the formal handing over of the inheritance, if the deceased was a married man. The heir sits in the doorway of the mourning hut and the senior wife of the deceased hands him a bill-hook, such as is used for pruning bananas. He is adjured by his relatives, his village headman, and his neighbours to care for the children of the deceased as if they were his own, and the widows are told: 'This is your husband who
[428] will hoe for you always.' If there is any division of property it is formally made on this occasion, the dead man's sisters and the village headman being primarily responsible for a just allocation. And though, traditionally, women were given no choice about inheritance, this was in fact the occasion on which their protests and preferences were expressed. Then the heir is thrown into the hut with the women he has inherited 'on to the ashes' (*umfwandelo*), and must have intercourse with all of them that night. One of

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587 and the widower should refrain from sexual intercourse with his
834 other wives until the ritual union with the 'wife who replaces the dead' (*unsasi*) at the 'shaving of the sprouting hair'. Nowadays, however, widowers do not keep this taboo strictly, and many lie with their other wives after the 'picking up of pumpkin-seeds'.

765 Before the 'shaving of the sprouting hair' for a dead woman her brother (or, if he is dead, his heir) goes to cut down the bananas at her former husband's home, as a sign that kinship between them is at an end, but he is persuaded to desist. Mwakwelebeja, an elderly man who had just performed it after the death of his sister Seba, the wife of the chief Mwaipopo, in company with his neighbour Mwaiselage and his wives, thus described the ritual:

> We arrived and our wives and the wives of Mwaipopo went into the house to wail, and we men went in too and cried: 'Alas father! Alas father!' Then we seized my *umwipwa*, the girl Ijonga, the daughter of Seba, and went off with her. The women, the chief's wives, fought with us and cried: 'Bring a cloth, bring a cloth!' They gave us a cloth and we left the girl. Then I seized a bill-hook and began to cut down the banana grove. I cut indeed! They cried: 'Not the banana grove!' and gave me another cloth.
>
> QUESTION: What does this mean?
>
> MWAKWELEBEJA: When we seize the girl it is as if we said: 'My child has died, the kinship is finished, it is finished here, I'll be off with my sister's children (*abipwa*), they are *my* children.' And when they give me a cloth they pay saying: 'Father, we pray you, don't! There is still kinship, Father, you are not a stranger! Do not terminate the kinship, it is still there.' And when I cut the banana grove it means the same; it means my child has died here, it is finished here, the kinship has ended. And when they give me a cloth, they beseech me saying: 'Not the banana grove, Father, the kinship is not yet finished, it still exists!' Formerly, if they were rich they gave a bull. . . . We were unfortunate, Mwaipopo paid us nothing.
>
> After I had cut the grove I gave bananas and meat (from a cow I had brought to kill) to all my sisters' children, on the roadway (outside the homestead). I stood with my back to them and handed the bananas and meat over my shoulder. They came up behind me one by one, and took the food in their mouths. [This was demonstrated, dramatically.] Yes, it is a ritual. If we do not give them bananas and meat, their legs swell up, they fall ill and become mad.

765 Some of our informants maintained that this ritual of cutting
184 the bananas was performed only when the deceased's family had no girl to send in her place. Mwakwelebeja and Mwaiselage, how-

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ever, insisted that it was performed whether there was a girl to send or not, but if several sisters were married to the same man it was carried out only for the eldest of them.

We do this whether we are substituting another woman or not, but we do it only for the senior sister. There were three Sebas married to Mwaipopo, and when the two junior ones died we did not go to cut the bananas, but now the senior Seba has died, we do cut the bananas.

Mwaiselage explained that his brother-in-law would come to cut bananas when his senior wife, Lyandileko, died, whether she died before or after her junior sister who is her co-wife, but the brother would not cut bananas at the death of the junior sister.

MWAKWELEBEJA: We cut the banana grove again when all the children of those women, the kinswomen married to one man, are dead. That is, their mother's brother's son (*untani*) does it, for their mother's brother will be dead by then. It means the same thing: 'The kinship is finished.' They pay to say: 'No, Father, it still continues.'

A woman to replace the dead is asked for even though her husband has predeceased her. X, describing the ritual added:

And when my mother dies (if my father has died first) still her relatives, my *abipwa*, come to cut the banana grove. I throw them a cloth crying: 'Not the bananas.' Also they bring me another woman. If they do not, I go to them and say: 'Give me another mother to look after me.' They give me a girl whom I give to a half-brother (as his wife). If there is no girl they give me a cow, saying: 'That's your mother.'

Ibaso and Mwaijamba explained:

If, when a woman has died, her people are poor, having no child to replace her, they say: 'We are sorry, but there is nothing at all here, this cow is for drawing water with.' And formerly they returned all the cattle later on; but now, since we have stopped claiming calves, we divide the cows. . . . But when there is a daughter and they give her to me, the husband, we give marriage cattle again. Kinship does not come to an end.

To recapitulate, the main events of the ritual of death are the formal recognition of the heir (if the deceased was a married man); the burial of a flowering head of bananas and the rubbing in earth from the grave; washing; a ritual eating of bananas with certain seeds; sweeping out the mourning hut; circling the hearth and putting an old pot on the fire with various foods; the presentation of millet by relatives and friends, and a ritual grinding; a second

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by the dust, at some other funeral without having completed the ritual for his own parents, and the danger of the 'gasping cough' exists only when a widow, having lain with the heir, eats or drinks with her own relatives.

Everyone knows the connection between madness and the performance of the whole ritual and between coughing and the final act, but not everyone is conscious of the symbolism of the various events. For example, Mwakisisile, a middle-aged pagan man whom we knew well, could not interpret the details of the symbolism and he explained: 'Some ask about these things in the ritual, some do not ask. I have not asked. We only know, many of us, that in the ritual we drive the shade, who is here, away from the body, and that if we do not drive him away we run mad. But we do not understand the details of the ritual such as straining water through a leaf, or passing the baskets between the legs, so as to be able to say: "This detail means this." ' Those most conscious of the symbolism are the *abanyago*, the officiants at the family rituals and the priests of the communal rituals. Kasitile, the hereditary rain-maker of Selya, who was a close friend of Godfrey Wilson's, and formally presented him to his dead ancestors urging them 'not to be startled at a white face', was our foremost authority on the symbolism of the Selya ritual. He was more conscious of the symbolism than most people, but his interpretation was confirmed at almost every point by others. Kasitile was not paid for information—none of our informants was—but he and Godfrey Wilson exchanged gifts from time to time in the manner customary among the Nyakyusa, and he often had a meal with us. Mwandisi, a very old blind chief living on the Lake-shore plain (MuNgonde) who was regarded by the Nyakyusa themselves as an authority on history and custom, was also a friend prepared to expound the rituals. His interpretation contradicted Kasitile's on one point only—he denied that one purpose of the ritual was to bring back the shade into the house. Other informants, though less coherent, corroborated Kasitile's interpretation, which may therefore be taken as a general, not a personal one.

There are nine main themes in the ritual: first, the driving away of the dead from the dreams of his close kinsmen, and measures to prevent him 'brooding over them' (*ukobatela*)—the word is that used of a hen brooding over her chickens. Widows, in particular, must be separated from the shade of their husband before the heir (or any other man) dare have intercourse with them. Secondly, the

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Then they explained to me that formerly it was forbidden to scrape bananas at a death, you eat them with the ash on, for if you scrape you will scrape your body also, that is, you will scratch and scratch. But now that custom is finished. Three men were scraping away.

Mwaikambo said: 'In all rituals it is forbidden to scrape bananas —in the puberty and twin rituals also.'

KASITILE: It is forbidden to scrape bananas only at a death ritual, not at other rituals. If you scrape bananas you scrape your own body. It is the corpse. We have died, we are the corpse. . . .

The mother's brother (*umwipwa*) hands bananas and meat over his shoulder to the children who are treated, then he goes off home and they go home without looking back at one another. If they do look back at one another the child will grow feeble and go mad. If the mother's brother does not come to cut the banana grove and do this, if the child sees others eating that banana it becomes feeble and goes mad. The banana and the meat are the filth which madmen take hold of, they are filth. Yes, it is like the banana which they eat at the pumpkin-seeds ritual.

QUESTION: Why the mother's brother?

KASITILE: Who should give it to them? Their kinsman (*unkamu*) should give it to them, he who looks after everything for them.

ii. *Mwandisi's interpretation.*[1]

QUESTION: What do you do in the death ritual, what does it mean?

MWANDISI: When a child has died I do not approach the women, my wives, until we have finished the ritual. On the night of the day we drink the beer then we come together. It is a ritual! Yes, the coming together of man and woman is a ritual (*bo bunyago*). If we come together before the beer then we overstep our child, Lubabelo, he will be impotent and not beget children. No, his children are not relatives (*bo bandu*) they are my comrades (*bobinangu*) but if Lubabelo forestalls (*ukukinda*) the ritual with his wife then he oversteps (*ukukinda*) his children. And when we have finished the ritual Lubabelo begins[2] and goes first to his wife. We follow him at our home. If we begin we would overstep him, it is taboo (*mwiko*). At the ritual of pumpkin-seeds, we drive away the shade, we say: 'Do not rise from the dead and come to us, go to the land of the shades, that we may bear and beget another child, you prevent us doing so!'

[1] His son Lubabelo, who was with us during the earlier part of the conversation, left so that we could speak freely. There was no difficulty about Mwandisi's wife being present.

[2] Mwandisi was referring to a ritual performed on the death of his son Lubalelo's child.

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heir. It is the ritual we are performing, they are signs of widowhood (*fya bufwele*), of lamentation (*kyo kesa*). The ashes are a sign of lamentation and the *ilingolongofwa* creeper is a sign of lamentation. Yes, all these things are part of the ritual, we cannot leave them out, it is taboo. (If we did) those below [i.e. the shades] would be angry and say: 'They have startled me and caused me pain in the heart; they have injured the ritual by foreshadowing evil.'

At the end the heir sleeps with the women in the house—before the beer. He performs the ritual with them, the officiants wait for them and ask them: 'How was it?' If he says 'No,' they say: 'Kyala does not stand in the house.' They go and divine at a doctor's who says:' So-and-so is angry.'

QUESTION: Kyala does not stand in the house (*Kyala akema nnyumba*)?

MWANDISI: It is the shades, they say Kyala does not give support. Then again he performs the ritual (*ikunyagula*, i.e. he attempts to have coitus) and they ask him: 'How was it?' They say: 'Yes, they (the shades) have stood with us, Kyala has stood with us.' [He gave both forms as alternatives: *batwemile* and *Kyala emile*.] Then they clap their hands and raise the shout of triumph (*akalulu*).

QUESTION: Is that the cry: 'Ours, ours!'?

MWANDISI: No, that's the cry of the hill people. With us it's taboo. Then in the morning someone shouts: 'War has come.' They come out immediately and run away to the pasture-lands.

QUESTION: Is this 'coming out' (*ukusoka*) the same as that in the coming out of chiefs (*ubusoka*) and in the twin ceremony?

MWANDISI: Yes, they run because their legs were heavy (*nsito*) in the house, now they have grown lighter and are strong; because in the twin ceremony the seclusion in the house lasts four months, at the coming out of chiefs two months, and that is hard, but at death it is only one, so it is light. But at death and the birth of twins it is the war (*ubwite*) of the mats. Is it not war with women? [*ubwite* is used here for sexual intercourse.] Then when they have come out they give one another beer to drink in the doorway. The heir takes beer in his mouth and spits it out and hands the vessel on to his wives and children. Each does the same. They do not swallow it. To do so causes diarrhœa. The man and his wives are burning. They have come from the bed. This giving one another to drink, when each spits and does not swallow, happens after the eating of sausages of porridge on the road.[1] It is the same in the twin ritual except that whereas it is only the principals who give one another to drink at the death ritual, in the twin ritual not only they, but all relatives, and even non-relatives do it as well!

QUESTION: How about the eating of millet porridge with powdered medicine on the road?

[1] No other informant mentioned this in the MuNgonde death ritual.

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ritual is powerful. If you do not perform the ritual for your father or perhaps that of your wife then you won't be a person, your body comes to an end and you die, but you are present, you are still alive, you do not die when the body comes to an end, you take faeces as in the ritual. But when they bring millet and say: 'This is so-and-so's, and this so-and-so's' (naming him whose ritual you have omitted) and brew beer and drink it, then you die.

QUESTION: How do the dead appear to us?

ANSWER: They appear before our eyes at night. You dream and in the morning say: 'I was with the so-and-so's in the night, with the so-and-so's!

QUESTION: Where do you go (at death)?

ANSWER: When we die we go above.

QUESTION: That's a new thing?

ANSWER: Yes, indeed, formerly we said we went below; our fathers and grandfathers said that. But we now say we go below to rot and stink only but since we look toward home when they bury us perhaps the heart (*indumbula*) goes above (*kumwanya*) and that is home. We have seen this in European times in books. No, I am not a Christian and I cannot read, I've just learnt this. . . .

KALUNDA (a doctor) AND MWAIJUMBA: The *ikipiki* medicine put into the beer and lees at 'the shaving of the sprouting hair' is the same medicine as that which we eat at the pumpkin-seed ritual. The *ikipiki* of the death ritual and the puberty ritual and the birth ritual is one and the same, but the medicine for twins is different. . . . There is one *ikipiki* used in all the three rituals—puberty, birth, and death—but to it is added another medicine which is different for each of the three. *Ikipiki* is our kinship, it is our blood (*ikipiki bo bukamu bwetu, lyo ilopa lyetu*); when my wife has borne a child and no one wipes its mouth with the *ikipiki* it means it is not my child, it is just a bastard from the veld, it is no relative of mine but a stranger. In the puberty ritual it is the same, we treat the girl with the *ikipiki* of her husband. She moves from our lineage, from that of her father, she is now a stranger, not their relative (*ikusama nkikolo kyetu, kubagwise, mundu leleno, aka nkamu gwabo*). When someone has died it is the same. We eat food together with the deceased, the shade, and his blood. It is like the Swahili custom of eating each other's blood to create kinship. It means: 'You were our kinsman from afore-time, but now it is finished, you are a stranger.' But the medicine for the twin ritual is separate, it is quite different.

2. IN KUKWE COUNTRY

The Kukwe ritual of death differs in detail from that of Selya and MuNgonde, but it is performed with the same overt purpose: to drive away the dead from the bodies and dreams of the

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764 mourners, to prevent him 'brooding' over them, lest they run mad
● 184 or become feeble in mind and body; to speed him on his road to the land of the shades and bring him back as a beneficent spirit in the house. The power of the shades over potency and fertility is acknowledged and the widow goes to her father's house with the 'filth' of intercourse with the heir on her and there drinks beer ritually, lest her relatives die of a gasping cough. In short, the themes which characterize the Selya ritual occur also in the Kukwe ritual.

Many of the symbols employed in the Selya ritual are employed by the Kukwe also: the elaborate washing with medicine and shaving and anointing to separate the mourners from the corpse, the casting away of leaves they wear in the stream, the sweeping out of the litter in the mourning hut, the miming of the action of a madman in eating faeces as a prophylactic against becoming mad, the use of the *ikipiki*—the medicine representing kinship—all these are common to both rituals. But each has distinctive symbols also.

(*a*) *The events*

764 The ritual begins in the evening, four or five days after the death. The participants wash with *nyasati* medicine in the doorway of the mourning hut, and lick lumps of porridge off the mid-rib of a banana leaf. The porridge is prepared by the officiant who grinds the millet at the doorway and then puts the mixture on two banana leaves, one of plantain (*itoki*), the other of sweet banana (*indifu* or *iselya*), which are used throughout as male and female symbols respectively. After sunset, a pot with medicine in it is put on the fire, and each participant in turn throws in a few beans mixed with medicine, and then some water, saying as he or she does so: 'This is the ritual of my mother' (or father, etc., as the case may be). A stem of plantains is 'stolen' from a friend's banana plantation (he having agreed beforehand that it should be taken), then the participants gather round the hearth and bid farewell to the deceased. They circle round the hearth to the music of a harp and sing. As they circle, the participants crumble pods of oil-seed (*inyemba*). Sometimes they also sing: 'It's the twisting up,' and twist up cloths as they do so. Then they dance the stamping dance, (*ukukanya nganya,*) and raise the cry of triumph (*akalulu*). When daylight comes they eat the beans which have stood overnight in the hut and sweep out the rubbish (*imindu*) with a medicine (*imitwati*) and throw it in the banana grove. This is 'clearing out the litter'

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764 prepared earlier) and ties a strip of medicated banana bark round the neck of each, and with these necklaces on they must sleep. In one lineage they take little horns and blow into them and walk round calling out: 'We are driving you away, you are a stranger to us, do not come in dreams repeatedly.'

Next morning sausages of millet porridge mixed with medicine are half-buried in the earth at the cross-roads—or somewhere on the pathway—and each participant in turn bends down and bites off a piece, leaving some in the ground. They take off their bark necklaces and throw them into the little hut, which is then destroyed. After they have bathed again the officiant strokes each one on the forehead with a razor.

768 587 When a married man has died the heir is formally recognized, and the widows are asked whether they accept him as their husband, at some point during the ritual; when Mwaikambo's father died the recognition of the heir preceded the whole ritual; more often it follows it and there is a formal drinking of 'the beer of inheritance'. In any case the first intercourse between the heir and the widows is always delayed for some months and, until it has taken place, the widows may meet their relatives; after it each widow returns to the homestead of her father (or his heir) for the 'ritual of the gasping cough' (*ingotolo*). Old Fibombe, a Christian elder, described it vividly:

768 177 587 The parents of the girl brew beer and call her to the beer of *ingotolo*. They also call their relatives. She brings a hoe or a goat (or now a cloth or 1s.). First of all she lifts up the pot of beer into which an officiant has put powdered medicine (*imbondanya*) and takes a mouthful, stirring the rest, then she hands it to another participant and when he has taken a mouthful she spits out, then she stirs and hands it on, and when the next has taken a mouthful she spits, and so it continues until all present have done this. Nowadays people do not take the beer in their mouths, they simply stir and pass it on. Pride prevents them. They say people will laugh at them if they do the things of old. Time is passing and things are like *Mambo Leo* [the Swahili newspaper] now. All pagans, however, still do this ritual in a modified form, only the Christians leave it undone.

[184]

768 587 This informant omitted two significant points in the ritual which we saw for ourselves: the widow brings a spear belonging to her new husband and thrusts it into the earth outside her father's house. It stands beside the vessel of beer while her kinsmen drink until her brother plucks it out and takes it into the

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764 773 QUESTION: What are the stones in the clefts of hands and toes?

MWASALEMBA: Kyala when he created men said: 'At the death ritual do this, it is the shade, it is the body.'

775 Mwasalemba went on to discuss the puberty ritual and attributed sexual desire and diarrhœa to the shades. He explained that faeces (which are buried) 'go below to the land of the shades' (*vide* p. 127; 210 ff.).

764 [158] SYUNGU: If we leave out something a child runs off to Mwibonde [wild pasture-land] and catches hold of that which is bad and pants with madness (*ikigili*). Some go to Mwibonde and gather faggots and put them on their heads then throw them away again.

QUESTION: How is it that people ever omit a ritual?

SYUNGU: Some omit some of it. They make mistakes out of ignorance.

QUESTION: But do any omit it altogether?

● [184] SYUNGU: No, only the Christians. No pagan neglects it altogether.

QUESTION: But those who have run away and are not there (e.g. women who have eloped with lovers)?

SYUNGU: Yes, indeed, it is they who neglect it, but those who are at home perform the ritual.

QUESTION: How about stealing the banana bunch?

SYUNGU: Yes, we steal it, but we tell the owner beforehand, and when we eat the mash we mix the stolen with the home-grown, that which is stolen is always a plantain and that from home is a sweet banana. The plantain is the man's and the sweet banana the woman's. And when we bathe we wear a plantain leaf, which has been stolen, in front, and a sweet banana leaf, which comes from home, behind.

MWASALEMBA:[1] The girl brought the spear of her husband and stuck it in the ground. At the end Losi (my eldest son and her full brother) pulled it up and it will always be on my wall. The spear is an essential part of the ritual; without it the ritual would go wrong. If she came with no spear we should send her back again to fetch one.

764 587 [828] We drink the medicine because, when our son-in-law has died and our daughter lies with another who has not been our son-in-law before, if she comes and gives us food with the filth (*indafu*) on her then we gasp and cough with *ingotolo*. It is quite different if she runs away from her husband when he is alive. Then we drink no medicine. Yes, then she comes, with *indafu* on her, and gives us food and nothing happens. I don't know why. Kyala made us black people like this. It is when her husband dies that we drink. We drink as soon as she lies with her new husband, not after she becomes pregnant. If we see that she is pregnant before she comes we are angry. She should come first to the ritual and then conceive. She does not wait until her periods stop before coming

[1] Referring to the *ingotolo* ritual for his daughter described on p. 66.

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for the ritual. We think that when she has slept with her new husband she is full (*nsito*) and if she gives us food it will make us ill.

MWANGWANDA: The new husband gives us relatives a disease by impregnating the girl, he who is no relative of ours, the new husband. *Ingotolo* is an illness.

ii. *Kakune's interpretation.* (Recorded by G. W.)

KAKUNE: Yes, if we do not perform the ritual the children run mad. They speak foolishly and deliriously, they run about wildly wearing leaves, they eat filth. But they do not fight with their fellows—that is what those do who have the madness of Kyala. It is these of whom we say: 'Perhaps Kyala loved them.'

QUESTION: Why the first washing?

KAKUNE: That is to get rid of the disease, the filth, for they held the corpse in their hands. They do not eat the ritual food until they have washed.

QUESTION: Why the eating of porridge?

KAKUNE: Because of the tears we have wept. We have mourned him; now let us eat and strengthen our bodies again.

QUESTION: Why are beans thrown into the pot in the evening?

KAKUNE: These beans, which we throw into the pot, saying: 'This is my father's death', are an ending of the ritual. They remain all night in the house after they have been cooked, and the shades come and eat. In the morning the doctor [*unganga*, i.e. the officiant] washes us again with powdered medicine and we eat the beans and finish them. We use beans in the ritual for that is the food which our father hoed. We think: 'Our father has died, he will never hoe for us again', and so we say: 'This is the death of my father.' So then the shade of our father comes at night and tastes the food and says to us: 'I, your father, have died, you have mourned for me; live you yet awhile, do not come quickly to death; and may you hoe plenty of food and have no hunger.' If we leave out this ritual with the beans the fertility of our gardens disappears and we have great hunger, we eat nothing.

QUESTION: Why the circling to the harp and crumbling oil-seeds?

KAKUNE: The ointment (made from the oil-seeds) is to finish the ritual. The song (*ukalende*) is to say good-bye, to the shade, it means 'farewell', it is to drive him away. We circle round because our father was an active man, he walked round seeing his friends, he danced; that is why we circle round the fire. [In Kakune's family they do not cry the war shout of triumph, they only dance to the harp.]

QUESTION: Why the pebbles? [I told him what Mwasalemba had said and he agreed heartily.]

KAKUNE: Yes, that's it! We throw them away, this means 'We have driven you away now.'

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764 QUESTION: Why the leaves and bananas?

KAKUNE: If you do not wear these and throw them away your own children [i.e. children of the participant] will die soon after birth; you beget a daughter and she dies, a son and he dies, then people say: 'See, you did not perform the ritual.' . . .

QUESTION: What is the meaning of the death ritual?

KAKUNE: Because the deceased has died on us (*atufwelile mumbeli*), if we do not treat him, he looks on us, we are together with him, he does not move away at all, so then, we drive him off.

He then described the acts of the ritual in great detail exactly checking what Mwaikambo and I saw when Kalata's mother died (cf. pp. 238–44) except that he did not mention grinding ointment [184] at the circling round. I asked about this and he thought it was not done in his lineage but was not sure.

QUESTION: The stones between the toes?

KAKUNE: It is to make a separation, it is our separation, we are driving him off; we go into the water with pebbles and throw them away, they are the deceased, we drive him off.

QUESTION: And what about running through the house letting the water drip on you after bathing?

KAKUNE: Yes, indeed, we come from the stream carrying water which we have drawn, and flowers in our hands, and we throw the flowers on the thatch.

QUESTION: What does it mean?

764 775 KAKUNE: It is because we have come from the stream, we have driven him away in the stream, but we bring back water we have drawn and flowers—they are the deceased. It means we are with him for he has not moved (*akasama*); let us drive him out again. We throw away the flowers on the thatch and we pour water on the thatch and it trickles down on the body. It is he [the deceased] whom we receive. If we drive him away altogether at the water what will he say to us?

QUESTION: You receive him and drive him off again?

[828] KAKUNE: We drive him off so that his whole body should not be seen, because we fear to see the dead . . . and at the same time we do *not* drive him away, he will come in dreams to tell us of misdeeds (*ukutubula inongwa*).

When we receive him we drive him away again at the anointing with ointment. The doctor anoints us on the toe, knee, elbow, stomach, and forehead, and says: 'I have finished them, anoint yourselves.' Then we anoint ourselves and say: 'You have moved to another village.' But at the same time we do not throw him away altogether, we pray to him

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maids and always carries a mat or cloth to screen her face from her father and his contemporaries, her father's full sisters, her older brothers,[1] and her 'mothers-in-law' (*abakamwana*).[2] These she must fear and respect (*ukutila*) and so avoid. Her father-in-law and his brothers she avoids altogether from the time of her engagement, or at least after she has reached the age of 8 or 9. Her companions do not *ukutila* with her, though those of them who are already betrothed will, of course, avoid their own fathers-in-law.

During the period of seclusion the girls have two specific tasks: to weave the fine mats used as beds, and to fetch firewood. Every bride should take to her husband's home at least one fine mat (*ubunyasa*) which she has made herself, as well as several coarse ones (*imitefu*),[3] and weaving a fine mat is a lengthy task, occupying a skilful woman a month. Each girl weaves for herself, but the firewood that each must fetch is stacked in the bride's mother's loft. The bride also occupies herself hammering out bark-cloth, pleating it for the strip worn between the legs, and decorating bark-cloth belts (*vide* plate 5), so that she may have the fresh ones required during the ritual, and a supply to take with her to her husband's; but this work is not emphasized as an obligation: rather it is a recreation. Women take great pride in the decoration of their belts—we watched several brides making them and handing them round for the admiration of their fellows. The maids may work in the fields if required to do so, but the bride herself does not, and 'she gets fat because she does not have much work to do'. The whole ritual normally lasts about three months, but if, for some reason such as a pressing need to go out to work, the husband is in a hurry for its completion, various acts may be telescoped. The time-table depends primarily on when the marriage-cattle and food for the various feasts are ready.

From the time of first menstruation until she does it ritually, a bride should neither wash nor oil herself. The prohibition is felt to be a very onerous one and some girls now break it, but women said 'in the old days we did not wash'. 'Girls nowadays are more cunning. We were afraid.'

[1] Some informants denied that she avoided father's sisters or brothers. Others insisted that she must avoid them because 'brothers are fathers, and father's full sisters are father'.

[2] i.e. her husband's own mother and other women he calls mother. In this account the plural 'mothers' indicates own and classificatory mothers.

[3] Nyakyusa beds are made of layers of mats laid on rollers between two logs at head and foot. One chief's bed we noted was made up of sixty-eight mats.

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354 new home, and her mother-in-law provides her with fire and a pot.

783 After the bride has had full intercourse with her husband she cannot return home, or see her own parents, until she has taken them the ritual *ilibalaga*. After sexual intercourse she wipes her husband's genitals with her hands, then wipes them on a fowl and some millet: these together form the *ilibalaga*. In the morning she goes off without washing—'with the filth of intercourse on her'—to her parents' house, taking the fowl and millet with her. The fowl is killed on a path and cooked with *ikipiki* medicine and, if the bride is the eldest daughter of one of the father's first two wives, her father and mother eat it together. Her mother eats alone if she is a younger daughter, or the mother is a junior wife. If the father is a chief the husband may kill a young bull and beef is sent in place of the hen.

834 After eating the *ilibalaga* her parents resume intercourse[1] which has been taboo from the time the girl first menstruated. If no hen is brought because the husband is poor, the parents still resume sexual intercourse, but the bride, when she visits her home, must not take water from her mother's pot. Someone else draws for her and she drinks it outside from a separate calabash. If she drinks [753] inside, or if her mother uses the calabash she has used, it is believed that her mother will get diarrhœa. She also avoids her father's bed and stool.

606 With the ritual of marriage must be included the negative ritual of avoidance between a woman and her husband's father and between those identified with him or her. The taboo applies from the time of betrothal or, if the girl has been betrothed as an infant, from well before she reaches puberty, and forbids father-in-law and daughter-in-law ever to look at one another or meet face to face on the pathway, or enter the same house, much less speak together. As we have seen, a similar taboo applies between the bride and her own father during her seclusion, but is relaxed when he [184] has given her a gift. Between a woman and her father-in-law, however, it is never relaxed, except among the more sophisticated
773 Christians. A myth of origin tells of a case of incest between father-
606 in-law and daughter-in-law which led to the establishment of the
811

[1] Kasitile maintained that if the mother has not reached the menopause the parents do not lie together until the daughter's pregnancy is apparent. 'For the mother to conceive before the daughter is forbidden, but old women are fruits sucked dry.' Mwakionde denied any danger in mother conceiving before daughter.

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her mother-in-law covers her head with a red cloth 'for display'. 'We are rejoicing because our child has grown up,' and she too takes her on her shoulders and dances with her. When the 'husbands' come to dance the stamping dance: 'It too is a rejoicing. It shows I have married a wife now.' All through there is rejoicing over the fine food, and the celebration and feasting is primarily among the women. The culmination comes when the girl is publicly shown to be a virgin and the mothers can claim the bull crying in exultation: 'It's ours, it's ours.'

An interesting sidelight on the attitude of girls towards the ritual came from a young man, a Christian, who was betrothed to a pagan girl and had forbidden her to go through the ritual. He said:

> Once my wife, when she had reached puberty, asked me why I objected to her undergoing the puberty ritual. I said it was forbidden for us Christians to participate in it, and I asked her if she wished to do so. She said 'Yes', and I asked why. She said: 'When the ritual is performed for us we are famed. People tell each other that so-and-so's daughter has grown up and people from far away come to sing songs, so we become very well known. See, now I have grown up, but no one sees that I have done so. Only you know.' Then I said: 'We Christians also have the custom of celebrating growing up at the handing over of marriage-cattle to the father (*ukukwa*). We do not hand over cattle when girls are still small, so everyone sees that a girl has grown up when we do so.' She agreed and said: 'I, also, have seen a little of the handing over of cattle among Christians.'

In fact, the *ukukwa* is the occasion for a great feast among Christians to which many young men and girls come to sing and dance.

The giving of presents to the bride by her father and his contemporaries is interpreted as part of the rejoicing.

> To give presents (*ukubonola*) is to rejoice. It's an occasion for display and rejoicing, because the girl has grown up. The father gives her a present because he rejoices that she has grown up. He says to her: 'Congratulations, you have grown up, you are going away to your husband, you are going away to gain a child!'

During the period of seclusion the girl's father is spoken of as her father-in-law (*unkamwana*). She must *ukutila* (respect and avoid) him:

> Because he is her father who begot her. She thinks: 'I must respect

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2. IN KUKWE COUNTRY

(a) *The events*

585 881 184 The puberty and marriage ritual performed by the Kukwe differs in detail from that performed by the Nyakyusa proper, but the main elements—the seclusion of the bride and avoidance of her fathers and brothers, the laying of a ritual litter, the meeting of maids and young men on the litter, the avoidance of water, the treatment with *ikipiki* medicine, shaving and ceremonial purification, the instruction, the celebration of maturity and virginity by the exchange of feasts between the bride's parents and those of the groom, the slaughter of the bull of virginity provided by her husband, and the taking of a fowl to her mother after first intercourse —all these recur. And the overt purpose of the ritual is again that the girl may be fertile, and healthy in mind and body. The main differences are in the symbols used for intercourse and purification, and in the location of the rites. Among the Nyakyusa proper most of the ritual is performed at the bride's home, whereas among the Kukwe most of it is performed at the groom's home.

585 881 When a Kukwe girl first menstruates her father sends his go-between in the marriage (*umfusya*) to inform her husband that she has grown up. If she has been visiting her husband, and is at his house when the first period begins, she runs home to her father's, and the formal message is despatched to her husband. He sends back a hen with the message: 'Thank you, you have nourished my wife,' and some time later sends a second hen by his go-between summoning her to come and wash. A party of two or three 'mothers' (her own mother does not go) and ten or a dozen maids takes her to her husband's, and there (if she is a senior wife) she washes with him in water mixed with powdered *ikipiki* medicine. The officiant pours the water which the husband catches in his hands, and the wife holds her hands below his. Then they kindle fire together by friction (*ukupegesa ulupendo*), husband and wife both twirling the stick (his hands are again above hers) and the officiant holding the horizontal trough. On the fire they have kindled porridge is cooked, which they eat together. A junior wife washes and kindles fire and eats porridge, not with her husband, but with his younger brother.

After the ritual meal 'mothers-in-law' cut banana leaves and spread the litter for the bride at their homestead, not at her father's. The officiant sprinkles powdered medicine over the floor on one side of the hut and makes two girls lie down with the bride

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(from under the bed) in the morning it has the filth of intercourse on it, then the father and mother should eat it. If this is not done they will fall ill with diarrhœa. If the hen is taken alive some eat it and others do not.'

After discussing this rite Mwasalemba went on:

You know, also, that when a girl has gone through the puberty ritual at her husband's she must not take firewood from her mother's rafters (*kwijulu*) until she is obviously pregnant. Before then, while she is lying with her husband, she must not. We say: 'How can you take your mother's firewood when you are sleeping with your husband?' It is just the same whether the mother is old or young. If the bride goes through the ritual without sleeping with her husband that is all right; it is when she begins to sleep with him that she begins to avoid her mother's loft. At that time I, the father, may meet her mother and sleep with her, but with *coitus interruptus*. I must not make her pregnant. The daughter must begin. As soon as she is pregnant then we parents can begin to conceive a child again. If we do so before our daughter, then she will never bear a child at all, and others will say: 'How could you overstep your daughter?'

Avoidance between father-in-law and daughter-in-law is observed as in Selya, but is slightly less strict.

(*b*) *The overt purpose and symbolism*

As has already been indicated, the symbolism of the Kukwe ritual of puberty is similar to that of Selya. The same actions are interpreted in exactly the same way and, where actions differ somewhat, they are still interpreted as expressing the same general conceptions. For example, the Kukwe bride and groom make fire together by friction and eat porridge cooked on it, whereas a bride in Selya eats bananas with powdered medicine, but both actions are symbols of sexual intercourse. Both in Selya and in Kukwe country the bride is purified and, as part of the process of purification, the shade of her father's lineage is driven from her body; but only among the Kukwe is this symbolized by sitting in a running stream and allowing the water to wash away pebbles from between her fingers and toes.

That there may be no doubt about the interpretation of the Kukwe ritual we again quote a number of statements by Nyakyusa informants. These refer specifically to the Kukwe form of the puberty ritual.

Chief Porokoto's wives, discussing the ritual together, were em-

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195 *Ukukinda* means to pass, to surpass, and *ukukilanya* (overstepping), in its metaphorical use, implies that 'one has power and the other is weak, so the powerful one does some injury to the weak one'.

834 842 [753] Fourthly, as was made apparent in the puberty ritual, it is held to be dangerous to 'mix bloods'. Adultery is not only an infringement of the exclusive rights of a husband, but it may injure him directly, causing him to have diarrhœa, which is a 'getting rid of the filth' due to contact with a strange 'blood'. It was implied that intercourse with a menstruating woman was in some sense 'mixing bloods' also, and the danger to parents of contact with a newly-married daughter before a precautionary ritual has been performed, stems from the same thing; the parents, through their daughter, are brought into contact with the blood of another lineage, that of the new son-in-law.

843 Besides being 'heavy' and therefore liable to 'overstep' others, a pregnant woman is thought to reduce the quantity of any grain she approaches, for the foetus within her is voracious and snatches it. Therefore neither she nor her husband (who participates in her condition) may approach other people's millet[1] or beans or oil-seeds spread out to dry, or speak to those who are reaping or grinding or stamping or brewing, without making a gesture of good-will by spitting on a pebble or knotting a leaf, and throwing it into the heap of grain. The sanction is fear of a miscarriage, for the owners of the food may have used medicines 'so that the food may be much and people be astonished'. Her own crops a pregnant woman may handle freely, and a chief's wife does not observe the taboo in her own village.

Two or three quotations will make these conceptions clearer:

ANGOMBWIKE: When my wife has conceived they say we are both 'heavy', both my wife and I. Then, if oil-seeds or millet are out drying in the sun, they tell us not to speak. 'You are heavy ones,' they say. So we are silent. They say that if there is talking we will catch hold of the oil-seeds or millet, and it will diminish. Yes, I must avoid the grain even though I am alone, because I am heavy.

KASITILE: Maize does not vanish but millet and beans. The child which is being made bewitches them; they disappear. . . . The child has opened its mouth wide, its jaws gape.[2] It is that child which is being

● [184]

[1] Some held that millet was the only grain affected; others maintained that maize was also.

[2] *Umwana apambwile ulupambo nkanwa. Ulupambo* is used of the gaping jaws of a crocodile.

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Even after her return a wife may delay before cooking or drawing water again for her husband. Mwaisumo said:

Some men do not let their wives cook for them until the child's body has gone black and it laughs. . . . This is mainly due to the mockery of friends, for some people refuse to come and eat with a man if the food is cooked by a woman who has recently borne a child, even though she has come out of confinement. They laugh at him and say: 'Why do you eat food prepared by a newly delivered woman? Have you no sense of disgust?' And her friends laugh at the woman, too, saying: 'Look you, the child has not yet grown at all!'

MWAMBUPUTA: Formerly a woman with a new-born child did not cook food. We said she was filthy. What food that she had overstepped would anyone eat? Until two months had passed she avoided cooking, then she cooked.[1] And she hid the child. Men should not see it for two months. It was taboo.

This is the full ritual performed for a first-born child and, some say, for the first-born of each sex. For others there is no sending a fowl to the girl's parents, or bringing her back with gifts, and it does not matter where the child is born; but still the seclusion of mother and infant, treatment with *ikipiki* medicine brought by the husband's mother, and shaving are felt to be important.

We did not find any significant differences between the rituals of birth in Selya and in Kukwe, but there is one rite peculiar to the Lugulu people and regarded by other Nyakyusa with somewhat shocked amusement, which is interesting because it expresses, in crude terms, a conflict between the groom and the bride's family repeatedly suggested in the ritual of Selya and Kukwe, but never openly acknowledged. We did not see this rite ourselves, but quote the account of Kakune, the doctor, whose mother was Lugulu. Though himself a Kukwe, he speaks in the first person as if he were Lugulu—a dramatic device common enough in Nyakyusa.

KAKUNE: When my daughter goes to her husband, and first becomes pregnant, they tell us: 'She is pregnant.' And we say: 'Oh, she is pregnant? She is pregnant! War has come!' When she has borne her child, the go-between in the marriage representing the husband comes to her parents with a hen to tell them. Then later they send the go-between a message, saying: 'Come'. Meanwhile they have prepared huge quantities of food: porridge, and curds, and beer. And then the girl's husband calls his friends of the age-village (he does not call his relatives, but his

[1] A monogamist eats with his friends in the age-village, or is provided for by his mother, like a bachelor.

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with medicines and have their legs splashed with a scalding concoction. Visitors to this ritual bring gifts of millet which is put to soak for beer. When it is brewed the 'bringing out' (*ukusosya*) rite is celebrated. The temporary huts are burnt and a new shelter is erected in which the parents have ritual intercourse. Parents, twins, and relatives are shaved and anointed with medicated ointment, and together with their neighbours again have their legs splashed with scalding medicine, this time by the father of the twins. The children are given sausages of medicated porridge which they must eat from the ground. The parents of the twins burst out of their hut and rush towards the pasture land, the father brandishing his spears. Then all the participants snatch some of the meat of a sheep or small bull which has been killed. The rest of the meat is reserved for the fourth, and final, stage of the ritual. A mess of cooked bananas, meat, and medicine is taken by the mother of the twins into her hands, immediately after the ritual intercourse. Her husband takes some of this to bury in his father's banana grove, or to throw in the direction of his father's grave; the rest the woman takes to her own parents, to be buried in her own father's grove. She drinks beer ritually with her parents, and 'steals' things from her mother's house, then returns to meet her husband and drink beer ritually with him.

So far as our information goes[1] the form of the ritual among the Kukwe scarcely differs from that of Selya and the plain and we describe it as we saw it performed in Selya for our neighbours, Mwakobela and his wife. Mwakobela was a junior half-brother of the chief, Mwaipopo. (See Tables (a) and (b).)

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i. *The birth of twins.* (Record of G. and M. W.)

Twins were born about eight-thirty this morning. We visited them at 5 p.m. in company with Mwaiswelo III (linked half-brother of Mwakobela) and Kikuku, who was representing Mwaipopo. Mwaipopo is 'owner' of the ritual because he is their 'father' (i.e. their senior brother). Mwaipopo did not go, though he was quite near, at our place. We found the woman with the two new-born infants sitting outside under the bananas, accompanied by the mother who bore her, and her mother's elder sister. The men seated by the house were the father, Mwakobela (Mwaiswelo II), his half-brother Mwakalendile and four friends from near by.

[1] We did not see the full ritual in Kukwe country, but had several accounts of it.

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ritual they distinguish *abakamu* (kinsmen) from *abandu itolo* (non-relatives) or *abapakipanga* (villagers), and *abakikolo* (those of the lineage of a dead man) from *abako* (affines) and mother's relatives (*abipwa*). These categories have different functions.

(*b*) *Christians*

The performance of family rituals is complicated by the fact that 16 per cent of the Nyakyusa are professing Christians, and in almost every lineage there are individuals who withdraw from the full performance of traditional rituals at death, puberty, and marriage, birth, and misfortune. In most cases such a withdrawal is treated tolerantly by the pagan kinsmen: the Christian kinsmen come to mourn, to congratulate the bride, to express sympathy with the parents of twins; and their non-participation in the washing and shaving and avoidance of ritual meat and beer is accepted. At the funeral of Mwamulenga his preceding full brother, who should have been a principal in the death ritual, was a Christian, and he took no part, though his children went through it. At the funeral of Mwampiki (p. 248) one boy was left untreated on the ground that he was a Christian and a Christian 'should not have two gods'. At the puberty ritual of Mwaihojo's daughter (p. 91) the brother called to wash with her was influenced by Christians and was reluctant to take part, though he finally did so.

Only when a son who is heir to family wealth, or to the office of chieftainship or priesthood refuses the inheritance of widows (as a Christian must do) is there very strong pressure on him to conform to traditional custom: the union of the heir with the widows is held essential to their health. Sometimes also there is acute conflict between different members of the family over the performance of an autopsy, the pagans pressing for it and the Christians opposing it. This we saw in the death of E. when her pagan senior brother wished to examine her, and her Christian junior brother opposed him vehemently.

That Christians cannot take part in certain of the rituals[1] and do not suffer if they omit them is generally accepted. The farewell to the dead at the homestead of the deceased, and the treatment of kinsmen of twins, fall into this category. About certain other rituals, such as the ritual of the gasping cough and the protection against sorcery, opinions are divided. Some of our Christian friends insisted that 'the gasping cough is a real illness' and cited

[1] There are minor differences in the rules of the different missions.

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the case of a Christian who had stayed away from a ritual in his family and 'as soon as he met his relatives he fell sick and coughed like an animal. So they got some of the lees of the beer and gave it to him and he recovered.' A number of Christian kinsmen, leaders in the Church, did not come to the gasping-cough ritual which we attended, but others did come and sipped the beer, or had the lees sent to them at their homes. In the ritual for protection against sorcery which we watched a Christian brother and his wife took part.

And some Christians, though they deny the necessity of many of the pagan rituals for themselves as Christians, still believe them to be necessary to their pagan kinsmen. Hence the anomalous (and to the missionaries the highly unorthodox) position of a woman professing Christianity and acting as officiant in a pagan ritual, as did N. in the death ritual for Kalata's mother (p. 239). N., it will be remembered, came by night. The officiant who performed the ritual for Mwakobela's twins was under instruction as a Christian and was proposing to hand on her medicines to her daughter, a pagan, when she herself was received into the Church. She explained this when Mwakobela (her patient) asked her: 'And what shall we do for twin medicine when you become a Christian?' And we had little doubt that she believed in the efficacy of her medicine for pagans.

Though Christians cannot go through pagan rituals as principals they do not withdraw altogether: they often help their pagan neighbours as grave-diggers at a funeral and in the provision of food for guests at funerals and marriages; and the young men and girls may dance as a separate group, singing their own songs or hymns and ignoring the drums. Sometimes acute rivalry between the two groups of dancers is apparent.

The effect of Christian teaching on pagan ritual is not limited to the partial withdrawal of professing Christians. In those villages most influenced by missions, such as Ilolo, near Rungwe, there is considerable scepticism among pagans, and many of them curtail the rituals in their families, or do not attend them. The Christian view is that 'the pagans see that the Christians disregard the rituals and nothing happens to them, so they begin to ignore them too'. 'Pagans fear much less than they used to do.'

Men who are in European employment either inside or outside the district cannot attend all the rituals. Their case is partially met by keeping the lees of the ritual beer with which to treat them

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meat is offered in the bride's father's grove; the two symbols of first intercourse—treatment with *undumila* medicine and jumping over fire; the recognition of the end of childhood by calling on the bride's mother to put her down off her back; the insistence that she show modesty before her father and his fellows as before a father-in-law; and the taboo on crossing water lest her menstrual flow become like a river.

The twin ritual is characterized by the fear of infection from too great potency, and the treatment with scalding medicines to 'burn' the twin birth.

Sometimes our informants gave different interpretations of the same symbol and there was no agreement between them, as with the stem of bananas stolen in the Kukwe death ritual, and the bunch of flowers brought back from the stream. Nsyani said stealing the bananas symbolized that 'we may now eat other people's food', and Mwamulenga that it was a symbol of driving away disease. Kakune, the doctor, interpreted the bunch of flowers brought back from the stream as a symbol of the shade which was brought home; Mwamulenga saw picking and carrying flowers as yet another symbol of the actions of a madman. Though there was general agreement over the interpretation of many symbols, it is possible that some have no commonly accepted meaning, but suggest different things to different people. It is clear, however, that with the Nyakyusa, as with ourselves, one symbol has often several associations for the same person, and Kasitile and the more self-conscious of our informants were aware of this. For Kasitile the banana in the death ritual is the corpse and the pumpkin-seeds in it the shade; it is also faeces which madmen eat; it is also, in the puberty ritual, the male organ and the seeds are the semen. Eating a banana is a symbol *both* of copulation and of the actions of a madman. Conversely, the same object or action is symbolized in many different ways—there are nine or ten symbols of sex intercourse, and twenty of driving away the shade, recorded in the texts quoted above.

When an action recurs in different rituals, informants almost always interpreted it in the same way in each context: the exception was the trampling dance (*ukukanya inganya*) interpreted as a way of 'driving away the shade' in the death ritual and a 'rejoicing' in the puberty ritual. It was always explained as 'customary'. 'Father and grandfather did it.'

This brings us to the ultimate explanation given for all the

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121 554 linked to the physiological cycle of individuals and their close kin, and cannot be detached from it as in Christianity.

121 626 Law is a condition of social survival; no society can exist without it; and in so far as religion helps to maintain law and order it fulfills a necessary social function. Among the Nyakyusa (and perhaps in all societies) order is maintained partly by fear of supernatural sanctions. The rituals we have described both enhance fear and relieve it. They harness fear to social ends.

121 771 The preceding chapters are full of the pagan fear of death, menstruation, childbirth, and shedding blood. The rituals express the fear and teach men what they must do to be saved. They teach them to co-operate with their kinsmen and to follow traditional custom, for in that alone does salvation lie. The fear of madness or sterility compels each generation to follow traditional custom as ordained for them by the heroes: thus is the dependence of man upon his society instilled. The death ritual illustrates this most dramatically. In every society men must overcome death emotionally, they must turn to life. In the death ritual the mourners are distraught, terrified; they express their grief and put it behind them; their relatives and neighbours gather round them, share their sorrow, and help them to overcome it. The dead is replaced. Death is associated with fecundity and so made tolerable. It is no accident that the Nyakyusa interpret all the rituals, and especially the death ritual, as a protection against going mad, against the disintegration of the personality. And safety is assured to the living by following minutely the traditions of their lineage.

[184] That the nature of men's fears is culturally determined is clear from the Nyakyusa evidence, for Christians and pagans alike are agreed that 'the Christians fear much less' than do pagans, and the Christians do in fact ignore taboos which the pagans feel to be binding. But the rituals do not create fear out of nothing. All the situations in which they are performed—birth and death, marriage, and misfortune—are situations of emotional tension in all societies. The rituals heighten the emotions and canalize them. They both teach men to feel, and teach them what it is proper to feel.

771 783 Many writers have shown us that the conception of sacred includes both the idea of holiness and of pollution;[1] that the awful, the fearful, may be conceived both as pure and as filthy. In

[1] See particularly W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (1889), pp. 153, 446–54 (1914 ed.); R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (1923).

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764 down from the thatch to the ground, a principal ran through the doorway so that the water trickled on to his body, then they poured more and he ran out again. Each of the three principals did this twice.

One officiant had been left behind to roast a chicken and some plantains, and when they had run through the drips they ate the food. They began with the roasted plantains in which they had stuck cooked lentils, then the boiled plantains and the beans which they had left separate from the mash, then the unsalted mash and finally the salted mash. When they had finished the officiants smeared patches of ointment on themselves and on all the principals—on the little toe, the navel, the forehead and the elbow—and then each anointed his whole body. Then the officiant took some banana bark, twisted it up and smeared it all over with powdered medicine. This she first made as if to tie round her own neck but did not, and then she tied it round the neck of the first principal. She put similar necklaces on the other two and they slept with these necklaces on.

November 17

Early in the morning when they first woke up the officiant brought some medicated millet porridge which they moulded into little sausages, then they went to the path some way off from the village, and there, on the path, they dug little holes into which they inserted the sausages. Then they bent down and put their lips to them, biting a piece off and leaving a piece in the ground, and this they buried. Returning to the little hut, they took off the necklaces and threw them inside, and they pulled down the hut and destroyed it. Then they went to bathe and washed off the ointment they had put on the day before. When they got home the officiant stroked each on the forehead with a razor but made no cut. So it was over.

They said that if any detail was omitted or done wrong the principals would go mad.

II. LOCAL VARIATIONS IN THE DEATH RITUAL

764 (a) *The funeral of Mwampiki and his wife* (see Table (c) p. 272.)
● 184 This document illustrates the differences between lineages in the details of ritual, and the adjustments made for the children of married daughters. Mwampiki, whose funeral is described, was of a Sangu family, doctors of the chiefdom for the 'coming out', who had lived for two generations in Selya.

Record of G. W. 16/3/37

Kakuju, the village headman, called me to the funeral of 'the wife of Mwampiki' in Ijesi village. Mwampiki (Mwamwenembanga) himself is dead but his homestead and several wives have been inherited by a

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younger half-brother, Mwaisalwa. The dead woman is a wife of Mwal- 764
emba (Kanjesi) another half-brother. Kanjesi was an old inhabitant of 184
this village but he moved to Masebe. His wife was on a visit to her 'fathers' at Mwakalobo's place in the hills. She went to a funeral there and fell sick and died there yesterday. The corpse was brought here this morning. It is now 10 a.m. and the grave is half-dug. The owner of the homestead, Mwampiki II (Mwaisalwa), is not here, he is sick at Masoko where he had gone for a case. The husband is not yet here either; they have sent for him to Masebe. The dead woman's elder sister and co-wife is here, and their mother.

They went to fetch a doctor to perform an autopsy, offering him [763
20 cents, but came back without him. 'He refused,' they said. 'Well 435]
then,' said Kakuju, 'take him a cloth, doctors do not agree to come for just a little.' So they took him a cloth.

Kakuju told the women to come out of the house as it was too small to hold them all. The corpse was carried out into the shade of an *unsyunguti* tree. All the women gathered round wailing, about seventy of them, and about twenty men.

No cows have been killed yet as neither the husband nor Mwampiki II are here. No drums are here yet either. The grave was finished about 11 a.m. I asked Kakuju about dancing at death. He agreed that in the [177]
old days they had only danced the war-dance. 'That was our old custom. Formerly we fought and killed people—the men of Mwangomo (another chief) who came to the funeral!' Mwambuga (the husband of the dead woman's husband's sister), who had been quite cheerful heretofore, suddenly began weeping and crying. He walked over to the women and joined in the wailing. Some small and naked children started climbing joyfully on the piled-up earth from the grave.

Now it is noon and there are thirty-five to forty men present and ninety to one hundred women. A doctor has agreed to come (to perform the autopsy) but has not yet arrived. Although the corpse was outside male mourners went into the house on their arrival to weep. An older woman got up and led a dirge. I heard her say a number of names, among which 'Mwampiki' was distinguishable. Clapping followed her words. Often she just called the war-cry (*akalulu*). The others wailed and joined in the war-cry. She accompanied her wailing with rhythmic movements of the body and arms. After a time she sat down but continued to lead the wailing.

Mwakalabela (Mbalakatela) arrived with a cow. His daughter is married to young Mwaijumba, the son of Mwampiki. The autopsy followed (for description see *Good Company*, pp. 247–9).

17/3/37

Angombwike told me at breakfast that now Mwampiki himself was dead. He died yesterday at Masoko and was carried here last night.

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764 184 They arrived with him in the middle of the night. The message reached Kakuju at cock-crow. I arrived at 9 a.m. to find the grave finished and one cow (a young one) killed. 'It was his own, and slept with the children'—i.e. it was stabled in his long house in the compartment in which the herdboys, his sons, sleep at night. The drums were being beaten—I heard them begin as I approached—but there was no dancing as yet. The corpse was being held upright (wrapped and hidden in cloths) by the women chief mourners, under the *unsyunguti* tree, in the middle of about 150 women. Wailing was in full progress. Two women were standing up to lead the dirges; one was the one who led yesterday. She called out: 'Mwampiki, Mbembela . . .' and other words. She stretched her hands towards the circle of women, towards the men and called out: 'You men, you young men . . .' and she called the villages by name: '. . . Lupondo, Njesi, Bujege, Bujenga'. I asked about this because Angombwike had told me that the Mwampiki family were Sangu and did not wail at a funeral. 'Yes, indeed,' I was told, 'they have changed now, but at the beginning [of the funeral] they did not wail, they were silent, they dug the grave and finished it, they killed a cow, and have only begun to wail now.' Two men stood by the corpse (among the women) wailing, his own eldest son and his brother-in-law. About seventy men were present. Dancing was begun by Mwaisyelage of Ibale who seized a spear and shouted the war-cry and danced. Half a dozen men followed him and several bananas were cut. Kakuju began to shout out words as he sat and then leapt up and joined in the dance. After five minutes the dancing died down and the drums stopped.

The grave, like that of yesterday, is an unusual shape. The hole is small and square and the cave is much bigger than usual. The corpse is laid down with the forehead pointing to Sangu country. 'Yes, the woman was buried just like this,' I was told in reply to my question. 'For though she is a Nyakyusa by birth, since she married a Sangu she looks towards Sangu country.'

A cow was brought by Mwakibilingwa whose daughter is the wife of one of Mwampiki's sons. 'Have you accepted the cow?' I asked. 'No one can yet,' said Mwaiumba, 'the real owner of the cattle is her child, the "owner" of the woman. Mwampiki's younger brother should not receive the cattle. No! But her child, the owner of the woman. If he wishes he will receive it and tell us. If he does not wish he will drive it away and tell us: "I am killing my own cow." We do not know yet.'

The corpse was carried with shouts and the war-cry and wailing about 100 yards, and the dead man's cattle were driven by the side (six full-grown beasts and two calves). 'It is to do honour to him here where he walked about, now that he has died. We do it for all senior people like him, not for juniors. Yes, and for women too, and even

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though there are no cattle they carry him thus.' The corpse was then taken to be washed. 'We do not examine him; yesterday's corpse we did indeed examine but not this one. He was a senior, a chief,' said his son, and Kakuju confirmed it. 'We do not examine him. We refuse because he was a senior person.' More cattle appeared—'those of his son at Masoko'. 'It is the custom,' I was told. 'All the cattle come to mourn. These are the cattle of Mwansasu, the first lot were Mbembela's own. Most (or all of them) were kept by Mwaipungu, the eldest son.'

The drums began again and dancing recommenced. The drums had been warmed up by a fire. About 200 women and 100 men were present.

Mbasuke, father-in-law of Mwansasu, brought a heifer calf. Three cows were killed, two after the burial, all belonging to Mbembela and his sons. The heads of the cows killed point towards Sangu country. There was a dispute about one of these cows. They had killed one already which had come for the marriage of a daughter of the family, and they had taken another from the same son-in-law. There was objection, some saying: 'No, we should take one which came from another son-in-law.' All the cattle of Mwansasu and of the deceased were driven through the homestead together, a herd of twenty or so. Then they were gathered at the side, facing the grave. The corpse was carried out to the side of the grave. The chief mourners stood holding the corpse and all the men and women stood up to watch. The noise of wailing was terrific. A son seemed entirely to have lost control. 'Alas Father! Alas Father!' he cried, his body trembling and sweating, the tears running down his face, his hand pointing, shaking, towards the corpse and the grave. A friend was wailing, holding his head with his hands: 'My friend, my friend!' The corpse was laid down by the women and wrapped in more cloths. This took about half an hour. Still we stood and watched while the women began to sit down. Two men (Mwaisalwa III and a half-brother) and one woman (his widow) got into the grave—a tight fit. The corpse was buried with a new pot (a small one, used for serving food), several calabashes including a calabash cup, and a calabash of beer. Some of the beer was taken out just beforehand and left above ground. 'That means he should not go with all our fertility.' A huge calabash had been smashed before this by a son, in an ecstasy of grief. Now another was brought but it was decided not to bury it.

Kititu explained about the beer: 'Always, when a person has drunk beer during his illness before his death, the remains are buried with him. If he has not drunk beer during his illness none is sought.'

No door was available so a cloth was fixed across the opening of the cave. The women got out of the grave while the men remained in to stamp down the earth. Many people threw handfuls of earth.

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Farewell to Mwampiki 2/4/37

764 184 Women began to wail about 9 a.m. I saw some arrive with bananas. They stopped wailing after ten minutes or so. Imilanwa (Mwaisalwa) was present. Mwaijumba had not yet come. I met Kakuju on the way. He had not yet been told of the ritual. Mbapa and Maleja (widows of Mwalingo) did most of the work, with Ijumba, widow of Mwampiki. Isalwa sat near and watched while Maleja ground up the ointment. Seeds for making ointment were put on the fire. This was the ointment for anointing oneself in the ritual. Beans were brought in a flat basket. 'We mourn', they said, 'with bean mash and the meat of a cow.'

There was some discussion about killing the cow and a dispute between Imilanwa and Simeni. Just as the cow was about to be killed a woman came and made them bring it to the side of the swept court [262] away from the graves. 'If you kill it near the father-in-law's grave the wives will fear to eat the meat.' The cow was killed by Imilanwa. He then called the men of the family to discuss whether or not they should kill a bull also. One had been sent by the Chief Mwaipopo who is 'our son-in-law. He married a daughter of Maleja'. Imilanwa said: 'Let us kill it,' and they agreed. Only thirteen men were present so far.

[171 177] The meat from the fork of the right foreleg (*ija mmapa*) was taken to eat with the mash. This is a Sangu not a Nyakyusa custom. The men of the family follow the Sangu custom. The women, daughters of Sangu, do likewise, and the women who are wives of Sangu, but the children of daughters who are married to Nyakyusa men from Selya do the Selya custom. If the daughter of a Sangu marries a Selya man then, if her father dies, she does the Sangu ritual at his place, but if her husband dies she does the Selya ritual at his place even if she has borne him no children, and even if she is herself a child or an infant who has not yet been to him. But her children always do the Selya ritual both at their father's home and at their mother's.

The burying of the banana flower and rubbing in earth is a Selya custom and is only done by the children of Selya men. I saw five or six children do it. Then more children came to rub in earth. One was under instruction at the mission. The women told him to rub himself but Mwaijumba broke in: 'If he is a Christian he ought not to perform the ritual.' 'He's under instruction.' 'Very well, he does not perform the ritual, for a Christian should not have two gods (*ba Kyala babili*).' The bull was killed a little way off among the bananas. Mwaijumba explained: 'It is just for meat, it's not for the ritual, the further off one. Christians will eat it.'

Shaving of the sprouting hair *Record of Mwaikambo, 22/4/37*

First the men and women began drinking beer separately. Then they began the ritual. They went to the grave with beer in a s[illegible]abash.

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The officiant prepared some beer mixing it with powdered medicine, and they came one by one to drink. The other officiant made as if to shave them, taking a little hair from the forehead and the neck. When she had done this she put her hands between her legs. Thus the people of Selya perform the ritual. In another calabash they put the lees of the beer that had been drunk, with two pots of water. These lees are poured on to their heads and the water runs over their bodies. When the officiant has done this she puts her hands and the calabash between her legs. They look towards Sangu country. Then they shave their hair. When they have finished they throw away the cloths and bark-cloth which they wear when they wash. Then they anoint themselves with oil, and sleep with it on them, and wash in the morning. The people of Selya shave in the morning; at this time they do not really shave, they only cut the sprouting hair.

In the evening there is the ceremony of handing over the inheritance. The heir sits on a banana stump in the doorway and the chief wife hands him a billhook. Then they say: 'Care for these children whom your elder brother left as if you had begotten them yourself, do not be hard, be kindly as he was.'

And at night he will sleep with the widows. In the morning the chief wife goes to her father without washing off the filth and gives her fathers beer, then they greet one another. Ndingania also goes to his mother's people. They said one woman did not go because her fathers did not know the custom, they are Lugulu. There were only these two women, one grown up and one a girl, to be inherited.

Mwaijumba told me that for Kanyosa their affines will not cut the banana grove for they have no girl to give in her place. 'They will give us cattle, we divide (the marriage-cattle) with them.'

(*b*) *Ndali funeral rites* *Record of Mwaikambo*

When someone has died the Ndali mourn for five days, and the sixth day they sweep and shave the hair. When they are shaving it they take a potsherd and put in it all the hair that is shaved off. When they have finished they choose one senior woman, the chief wife, and they hand her this hair and they go to throw it away at the cross-roads. Giving the woman the hair means that the shade should be at his place and leave others. Shaving is to get rid of the shade which was on their bodies (*ukunwa ko kunsosya unsyuka uju bali nagwe mu mbili*). And the people who held the corpse in their arms and dug the grave step over a trench of fire when they have come from the bathing. The doctor gives them medicines to bathe with. They say that if they do not step over fire it is as if they had the dead on their bodies (*balinagwe mumbili umfwe*), and he will always come in dreams, so they drive him away.

When some considerable time has passed—a whole year—they do the *ilyengulo*. This word comes from straining beer. To strain the *ilyengulo*

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621 622 fought each other and one was sometimes reduced to a subordinate position by the other. Such subordinate or minor chiefs did not always lose all power, some men often continued to live with them, but not many, for they were poor and could not afford the feasts that prosperous and powerful chiefs gave to their warriors. Nowadays the junior of the two young chiefs, in the majority of cases, becomes subordinate to his brother immediately, for the Administration normally recognizes the senior of the two only, and a salary is paid to him alone on the old chief's death.

The number of villages which "come out" with each young chief usually varies between four and eight. But if a chief is subsequently reduced to a minor position he will often end his life with one village only of adult men and one village of their sons. For people move from minor [624] chiefdoms and the depleted villages that are left gradually coalesce under the leadership of one of the great-commoners. The son of a minor chief may succeed to his father's position, but only one son will do so; a minor chiefdom is too small to be divided and has no formal "coming out" of its own; its young men attend the "coming out" of the superior chiefdom.

621 423 So much in outline for the political constitution of the separate Nyakyusa chiefdoms. Some account of it was a necessary preface to the discussion of individual land rights, since it is within this political structure that they have validity. If, for example, the boundaries of a village are changed at the "coming out"—and they very frequently are—then no individual rights to village land can be maintained outside the new boundaries.

631 Prior to the arrival of the Europeans there was no paramount political authority among the Nyakyusa, but a number of tiny independent chiefdoms side by side, with minor chiefdoms in some cases attached to them. Of these traditionally independent chiefdoms there is none, I think, which to-day exceeds 3,000 adult male members, and most of them are far smaller than that. This smallness of scale, which is difficult at first for a European to grasp, is the fundamental characteristic of primitive society, in the organization of which personal relationships are predominant, wherein social relationships, that is, mainly subsist between personal acquaintances. In the old Nyakyusa polity impersonal relationships, effective social bonds linking together men who were personally unknown to one another, though they existed had relatively little importance.

648 ●184 Just south of the Nyakyusa, in what is now North Nyasaland, live the Ngonde[1] people, whose language and culture was and is very similar to that of the Nyakyusa. They were, however, slightly more civilized in that they were in closer contact with Arab and Swahili ivory traders; and

[1] Better known to Europeans as *Konde*.

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the wealth derived from this trade enabled one of their chiefs, Kyungu, to maintain himself as paramount over all Ngonde. Among his people impersonal relationships thus had a greater importance. And it was, I believe, the historical isolation of the Nyakyusa from any considerable commercial contact with the outside world which prevented the rise among them of a paramount chief.

To-day the Nyakyusa are in process of integration with the civilized society of the world and the independence of their minute chiefdoms has inevitably passed away. The traditionally sovereign chiefs have been grouped in seven court districts with one chief as President of the Native Court in each ; and these seven chiefs together with the two Presidents of the Ndali and Lambya Courts are federated, with an Appeal Court and joint Native Treasury of their own. In the seven Native Courts most of the traditionally sovereign chiefs are entitled to sit with their great-commoners, and assist the President and his great-commoners in the hearing of cases. The bulk of the legal business previously transacted by each chief in his own country is now taken to Court, but the power of great-commoners to settle disputes by arbitration in their separate villages is still the basis of the legal system.

A poll tax, now (1938) fixed at 9/- per annum for adult males with no additional tax for plural wives, has been introduced and chiefs are paid small salaries ranging from 5/-, 10/- or 20/- a month for ordinary chiefs to 80/- or 100/- a month for the Court Presidents.

The Nyakyusa, as we have previously mentioned, consist of a number of immigrant groups who have spread among and incorporated an indigenous population. The main immigrant groups were three in number and are distinguished to-day by the names of " Nyakyusa," " Kukwe " and " Selya." As all these three groups together (including those who are now incorporated in them) call themselves " Nyakyusa " to the outside world, I distinguish the one group to which the name more particularly belongs as the " Nyakyusa proper." The Nyakyusa proper live in the plain of Mungonde and up on the higher ground as far north as Tukuyu, the Kukwe live north of them around the base of Rungwe Mountain while the Selya live in the east of the district, between the Nyakyusa proper and the Kukwe, right under the wall of the Livingstone Mountains. Between the three groups there are minor differences of dialect and custom.

The extent to which the indigenous groups retain any separate identity varies in accordance with the number of the immigrants and the date at which they reached them, but over a large part of the district fusion has been complete.

We have already discussed the economic relations between the Nyakyusa and the Lupa gold fields which provides them with a market

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tive capital, Tukuyu, and it is still thus used to distinguish this group from others. This group will here be referred to as "*Nyakyusa proper*." Those in the North of the district to the West and East of Mount Rungwe call themselves *Kukwe* and *Mwamba* respectively, and there is a group of chiefdoms to the East, under the Livingstone Mountains, called *Selya*. All these four groups share a common culture, distinguished by minor local peculiarities of dialect and custom. Immediately bordering the Nyakyusa to the South West are the *Ngonde* (Europeanized as "*Konde*") in Northern Nyasaland; they belong to the same cultural group but are distinguished by greater differences of custom and speech than the others. I have not yet visited them.

In the hills to the West of the Rift live the *Ndali*, who are included in this administrative district; and on the plateau under these hills, to the West of the Kukwe, live the *Penja*. Both these small groups have old languages of their own which, though related to that of the Nyakyusa are more or less unintelligible to them; and they have equally distinct cultures. But they are now rapidly being assimilated to the Nyakyusa both in speech and in law.

I use the name Nyakyusa, in accordance with modern usage, to include the Nyakyusa proper, the Kukwe, Mwamba, and Selya groups, but to exclude the Ndali, the Penja, and the Konde. The Nyakyusa together with the Ndali and Penja number 150,000; the Konde of Nyasaland 30,000.[3]

Members of the Berlin and Moravian Missions were the first Europeans to settle in the district, where they have lived now for forty-five years and have made numerous converts. The German Administrators followed them closely, and later came a few planters. But pronounced economic change is a matter of the past five to ten years during which time the Lupa Gold Fields of South Tanganyika have been opened up and have employed increasing numbers of Africans on the diggings. During the past few years the young men of the Nyakyusa have developed the habit of going for a few months, now and again, to the Gold Fields to earn money for tax and clothes. They seldom stay more than six months at a time, often only one or two; so that their absence does not cause the same difficulties in their own community that are found in other areas where the men spend longer periods away from home.

The Family, together with a sketch of wider Kinship Groupings

The relationships of husband and wife, parent and child, sibling and sibling are continually visible in the culture of the Nyakyusa. The

[3] Government Census figures.

8:Wilson E-5(1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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As the boys one by one reach the age of ten or eleven, two important changes usually take place in their lives. Firstly they leave the herding of cows to their younger brothers, and themselves begin the business of hoeing the fields which will occupy them until they die; and secondly they no longer sleep in the houses of their fathers but join an age-village of boys. These two changes usually, but not always, take place at the same time and normally at about the age of ten or eleven years, well before puberty. But there are cases where special circumstances put the age of one or both of these changes later; I know one boy who herds his father's cattle although he has reached puberty, because he has no younger brother old enough to take over, and there are only five or six boys in his herd-group altogether. And in general I am told it is not uncommon for some boys who have reached puberty to be found still herding cattle. Again in one age-village the boys leave home a little later than usual because there are leopards about and it is dangerous for small boys to walk from the village of their fathers to that of the boys after dark.

(*b*) *The Boys' Village*

When a fair number of the sons of a village of married men have reached the right age, their fathers give them a piece of land to one side of the parent village on which to build. There they build little huts of reeds for themselves, sufficiently well-thatched to keep out the heavy rain, and there they sleep. The building of the huts on this land begins, in a playful manner, before the boys move. While they are still herding the cows and sleeping at home they build minature huts there in their spare time, but do not sleep in them. When they move they build slightly more substantial huts with a better thatch. Until he marries each boy hoes his father's fields in his father's village and eats food cooked by his own mother at his father's house. But he sleeps with his friends. Thus between the time when he leaves home and his marriage each is a member of two villages, economically he still belongs to that of his father, socially to that of his own contemporaries. Though bachelors eat at their parents' homes, it is very rarely that they do not eat in the company of their own friends. A bachelor does not simply go home to eat but a group of bachelors, friends of the same boys'-village, go round together eating at the house of each one's mother in turn.

In an age-village of married men there are always several different herds of cattle; and it is not only those from the same group of herd-boys that set up a new village together, but all the sons of the age-village. When a boy leaves the herd-group he joins a larger community, including the friends of his own age who have herded cows with him, but many

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE peoples with whom this book is concerned, the Nyakyusa and the Ngonde, occupy an area shut in by mountains at the northern end of Lake Nyasa, and enjoy a culture which, though varying locally, clearly springs from a common basis and is traditionally attributed to similar origins. The most conspicuous features of their political organization are (i) the balance of power between chiefs and commoners; (ii) the 'coming out' ritual in which a generation of men which has governed for approximately thirty years retires and hands over the administration to its sons, retaining only ritual functions; and (iii) the system of age-villages.

All are agreed that chiefs and commoners belong to different stocks; the commoners being descended from the original occupants of the country while the chiefs trace their descent to a line of invaders who came down from the Livingstone mountains eight generations ago. According to the myth, they brought with them fire, and cattle, and iron tools, and they found a people who ate their food raw in a land 'without trees'.[1] Commoners are *abatitu*, black people, while Ngulube, an early ancestor of the chiefs, was 'pale'[2] and chiefs (*abanyafyale*) generally are said to have been lighter in colour and 'different in their bodies'. After generations of intermarriage between chiefs and commoners there is no consistent difference in physical type between them, but the range of physical type among the Nyakyusa as a whole is wide.[3]

Nyakyusa and Ngonde historians say that their chiefs are related to those of the Kinga, who live high above the Nyakyusa valley to the east in the Livingstone mountains, whence the chiefs came. The Kinga acknowledge the connexion and join with the Nyakyusa in sacrifice to their common heroes, but culturally the

[1] Possibly the lake-shore plain. The hills until cultivated are covered with either savannah or rain forest.

[2] Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 3, p. 10 (1930). According to the Ngonde version Ngulube was the *first* ancestor.

[3] cf. F. Fülleborn, *Beiträge zur physischen Anthropologie der Nord-Nyassander* (1902). *Das Deutsche Njassa- und Ruwuma-Gebiet Atlas* (1906).

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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inheritance ensure that a limited number of young men are absorbed into the senior generation and live with the older men, sharing their activities and from time to time holding office as headmen or priests of that generation, and the selection in each generation of young men who are *not* the sons of village headmen, or chiefs, or headmen of the past generation, ensures that commoners without office are constantly recruited to the hierarchy of rulers. In short, power is distributed.

(c) RITUAL AND SECULAR BONDS

As in so many societies, economic and ritual links extended, traditionally, further than political links.[1] Selya was dependent upon BuKinga for iron and the Kinga came to fruitful Selya to pray for fertility. The priests who came to pray brought the hoes. The many independent chiefdoms of Selya and the Mbaka valley acknowledged the spiritual overlordship of the Lwembe by sending sacrifices to him, and it was through the network of hereditary priests like Kasitile, Mwanakunda, Mwalukuta, and Nyama of Selya, and the Kinga priests Kikungubeja, Nsyanigwa, Kyamba Kitali, and Silobwike that wider bonds were maintained. Mwaipopo (116) when he was granted a Court which gave him the secular leadership of Selya, failed to make any acknowledgement of Lwembe's traditional power, and it was Kasitile who later urged him to do so. The western chiefdoms of the Nyakyusa still buy medicines and bark-cloth from the Ndali to the west, and have done so for many generations, but no common ritual links them as it does Selya and the plain with BuKinga. The trade was of lesser importance than that to the east, for it does not seem to have included iron, though the Nyiha who share a common culture with the Lambya, the western neighbours of the Nyakyusa, are known to have been skilled smiths.[2] With the Sangu to the

[1] cf. E. Colson, 'The Plateau Tonga of Northern Rhodesia' in *Seven Tribes of British Central Africa* (ed. Colson and Gluckman).
A comparison with the frontier in West and South Africa where economic and religious expansion compelled the establishment of Government is instructive. Cf. W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, vol. ii, part ii, pp. 162-8.

[2] D. Kerr-Cross, 'Geographical Notes on the Country between the Lakes Nyassa, Rukwa, and Tanganyika', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, vi (1890), p. 289. Elton's suggestion that some of the Nyakyusa iron came from the west is discounted by Cotterill. J. F. Elton, *The Lakes and Mountains of Eastern and Central Africa* (1879), p. 371 and map, cf. J. Thompson, *To the Central African Lakes and Back*, vol. i, p. 272.

N 233 cattle in the district in the 1941 census was about 2.3 head per taxpayer or 55 head per square mile. Certain land is set aside each N [184 year for grazing, where stock is not able to 635] interfere with the produce plots. Compensation for trespass of cattle on cultivated land is only paid among people of the lake shore.

N 656 Parts of the land to the west of Tukuyu 134 have been badly eroded by cultivation and 185 over-grazing, and it is only since 1935 that 242 anti-erosion rules have been made to check the tendency for bad cultivation. Since they were brought in, however, the majority of the tribe have become very keen on seeing the effect that well-controlled cultivation has on crops. The following are the Native Authority Rules concerning anti-erosion:—

"Throughout the Rungwa District, all natives shall follow orders regarding cultivation designed to prevent soil erosion as demonstrated and enjoined by the Agricultural Officer.

(*a*) All ridges and terraces shall be contoured and not follow the slope of the hill.

(*b*) In the case of cultivation done on the flat and not on ridges or terraces, a large ridge and ditch shall be dug at the top of the plot to remain permanently and be repaired from time to time."

N 439 The Wanyakyusa have never been dependant on outside sources for any of their food, N [135 but in their own territory there is no iron for making hoes nor clay for making earthenware pots. The former they were accustomed to get from Ukinga, on the eastern boundary of the district in the Livingstone mountains, and the pots were, and are still, made only by about 500 members of the Wakisi tribe living in a K village on the lake shore at the extreme south- 439 western point of the district. The Wakisi are 101 really of Ukinga origin and inhabit the eastern, northern and western shores of Lake Nyasa. They grow no food except cassava, and that only recently, and apart from the one village that makes the pots, their only work is as paddlers of canoes and fishermen. Most of their fish and pots are exchanged for food.

N 443 Since the Tukuyu District is so thickly populated and the inhabitants concentrated, it has been found necessary to create produce markets at comparatively short distances. N Transport from these markets, during war- 438 time, has become difficult. The natural outlet 316 for Tukuyu native foodstuffs is the Lupa Goldfields, which lie about 100 miles to the

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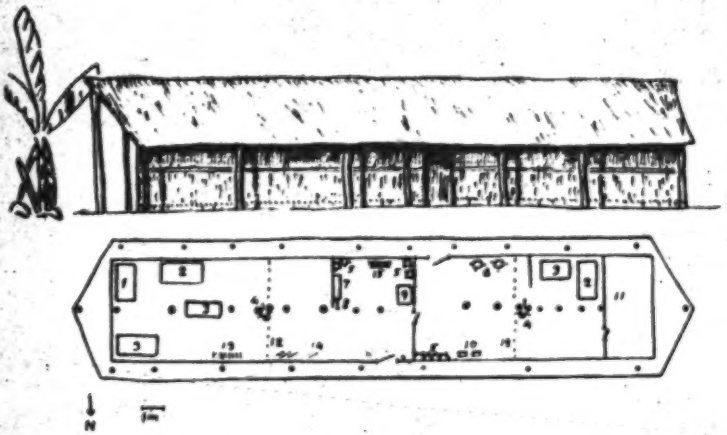

An *ilikaga* in the village of Kisondela, the district of Rutengalo, belonging to a man with two wives. The rooms have bamboo ceilings from dotted lines to either gable. Posts reaching to ridge of roof are filled in. 1, husband's bed; 2, wife's bed; 3, child's bed; 4, hearth; 5, hens' nests; 6, water jar; 7, roost; 8, ladder; 9, table; 10, stools; 11, store-room; 12, dotted lines show limitation of ceiling; 13, small objects; 14, working material; 15, sleeping mat.

born. On page 357, he reports how the boys, when 7 or 10 years old, will leave their parents' house to live in long, rectangular cowhouse-like houses big or small, in a special youngsters' quarter at the far end of the village. On page 358 he writes: In many cases you do not know for certain whether you are dealing with a youngsters' house or a cowhouse—for the cattle may well be kept in these houses—or the herdsmen may sleep in the cowhouses. However, this mostly holds true of the low-lying Konde country, while on the other hand, in the high country, the cattle is usually kept in the dwelling houses. On pages 371 and 372, he relates how the cattle is tied to posts at night, and he shows a picture of a cowhouse.

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He also refers (on page 376) to the use of the rectangular house for married men besides the boys. The difference is seen in the fact that these houses are not roughcast with mud, as this work is the province of women. Finally, he reports that, during the last few years of his stay in the Konde country, he saw Konde houses being built under increasing influence of the coastal culture, in imitation of the Swahili houses. They were roughcast with mud inside and out, and had a verandah supported by posts.

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In 1955, many *ilikaga* could be seen. Some were for the cattle, but most were dwelling houses for married people. (Boys aged 7–10 and upwards until the marriageable age lived in ramshackle boys' houses, the material of which was not bamboo, but a thinner grass, resembling bamboo very much. These houses stood

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14: Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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usa. It is true that one still meets blacksmiths on the outskirts of the villages or some distance away from them (as in the case of the Ndali tribe, western to the Nyakyusa area), but they no longer smelt the iron from ore mined by themselves as in former times. The smith of to-day remelt only scrap iron from disused motor-cars and other machines into tools, hatches, and spear-heads, unless, of course, the natives prefer to buy imported iron-ware. As with the Chaga, also the Nyakyusa smith can only be persuaded to submit to being photographed after long negotiation and a change into better clothes. The blacksmiths I met in the Bundali Mountains, however, made no objections whatever to being photographed at their work. Also women were allowed to attend. But one feature of the ancient Nyakyusa blacksmith's culture has been preserved till the present day: the lower part of the bellows through which the air blast is driven into the fire is still made of wood. This feature has been defined by H. Baumann as an element of the "ancient nigritic culture".

12. Dress. The cloths of the Nyakyusa have changed to a very considerable degree since the beginning of European influence. A comparison of the earliest pictures and descriptions of inhabitants at the northern end of Lake Nyasa with the dress of modern times brings out this point most forcibly. Originally the Nyakyusa went almost naked, adorned only with rings and belts, but nowadays all degrees of compromise with European fashions of dress are to be found, especially near the European settlements and Mission Stations. The most conservative element are, in this case, the women. It is still possible to-day to observe in each village the preparation of the long strips of bark *(elyabi,* pl. *amabi)* commonly worn by the women. The so-called *impandapanda* (Fotheringham: *mlambe)* tree furnishes the dress material. After the bark has been immersed in water, the bast is beaten with wooden instruments and then pulled off from the harder parts of the bark. These tools are like hammers; the flat end of such an implement is furrowed, sometimes with a disk made of horn, and as it produces patters on the bast it is called *"obosimbe"*, that which produces patters. These long belts, almost reaching the ground, especially in front, are mostly ruby coloured, but the women sitting in front of their huts manufacture also other types with geometrical (triangular) patterns in yellow and brown forming only girdles *(umpango).* In addition to this minimum requirement in the way of dress some women around the waist also wear copper belts *(manyeta),* made of thin copper-wire, spiraly wound on a core of hairs from the tails of cows. These

14: Lehmann E-5 (1939)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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343 Also the stables I saw were very clean; their length is adjusted to the number of cattle which are sheltered therein. Sometimes a wooden hoop is to be found in such a stable, hanging down from the ceiling. [251] The inside of the hoop is filled with a wicker-work whose meshes are dense enough to hold fruits to be dried. If such a hoop is hanging in the stable being out of use, a bag made of leaves containing pumpkin seeds *(inyugu)* for later planting may be fastened to it, and on the beams of 233 the framework of the walls you may find a plaited leather neckband *(ulukoba)* for cows destined to hold a cow's bell *(ibangala)*. The sound of the bells of the cattle gave already great delight to the first European visitors of Nyakyusa and Ngonde Land, as we can read with Fotheringham (p. 24): "It is a pretty sight to see the herd coming into villages in the evening, and pleasant to hear the tinkle of the bells which are suspended from their necks, recalling in homely quietude the peaceful scenes of the Swiss."

184 The daily life of the Nyakyusa differs more or less among the 101 different ethnic groups which in former times had been independent units. Nowadays, however, all those groups who have similar speech and customs and share, therefore, a progressing common culture, only distinguished by minor local pecularities, are called by the common name "Nyakyusa" (Cf. G. Wilson: An Introduction to Nyakyusa Society. Bantu Studies, Vol. X, 1936, p. 254 f).

Synopsis

080 Verfasser beschreibt in diesem zweiten Bericht die verschiedenen Arbeiten aus dem Alltagsleben der Nyakyusa. Die Betreuung der großen Rinderherden, einschließlich des Melkens, ist Männersache, die Frauen reinigen nur die Ställe. Die Männer behacken die Felder, die Frauen säen, reinigen, ernten und bereiten alle Nahrung zu. Diese Arbeitsteilung fand Verfasser 1939 noch unangetastet, dagegen waren die zahlreichen mit Saat und Ernte verbundenen Zeremonien durch den europäischen Einfluß fast verschwunden. Ebenso war der Verfall der traditionellen Künste und Handwerke weit fortgeschritten durch europäische Einwirkungen wie durch die überall verstreuten indischen Händler als Vermittler der ausländischen Waren. Diese hatten auch die traditionelle Kleidung abgewandelt (als die Europäer kamen, gingen die Eingeborenen noch überwiegend nackt). Die alten geometrischen Muster, die äußere Hüttenwände und Türen schmückten, waren zum Teil mit Zeichnungen von Fahrrädern, Autos, Flugzeugen u. a. durchsetzt. Während früher auch das Alltagsleben der Nyakyusa in deren verschiedenen ethnischen Gruppen deutliche Unterschiede aufwies, sind diese ehemals unabhängigen Einheiten unter den europäischen Einwirkungen mehr und mehr kulturell zusammengewachsen.